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SERMONS

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN EMERY ABBOT,

OF SALEM, MASS.

WITH A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY HENRY WARE, JR.

BOSTON,
WAIT, GREENE AND CO., 13 COURT STREET.
1829.

I. 9786
Channing

BOSTON,
Press of Isaac R. Butts.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE present publication has been undertaken by two of the friends of the lamented author, not simply with a view of preserving some memorial of a man singularly beloved, but yet more with the hope of advancing the cause of virtue and religion by a volume calculated to aid and instruct serious inquirers after duty and God. At a period like the present, when the taste for what is stirring and exciting has become so prevalent, it is not improbable that the tone of this volume may appear to many too calm and unimpassioned; but it is not doubted that there are also many, who will give it the heartier welcome because it breathes only of "the gentleness of Christ," and is so far removed from the violent and exaggerated language, which has too much crept into the theology as well as the literature of the day. At any rate, the Editor cannot persuade himself, that such

a volume as this can be otherwise than most acceptable to those who are engaged in the cultivation of the religious character, and solicitous for the means of advancing themselves in the peculiar temper of the gospel. It is not offered to critical readers, who are seeking an intellectual refreshment, but to those who will keep it in their closets as the companion of their holier hours, and the aid of their devout aspirations.

It will be perceived, that only a portion of the volume is constituted of complete discourses, and that the remainder consists of select passages from sermons of which it was not advisable to print the whole. By this means a greater variety of topics has been introduced, and the volume, it is thought, rendered more valuable.

The Memoir was originally written for the Christian Disciple, and is now republished with additions. These are principally extracts from letters, and from a journal kept at Havana.

Boston, March 10, 1829.

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MEMOIR.

Calm on the bosom of thy God,
Fair spirit! rest thee now!
E'en while with ours thy footsteps trod,
His seal was on thy brow.

Dust, to its narrow house beneath!
Soul, to its place on high!
They that have seen thy look in death
No more may fear to die.

Mrs Hemans.

"Among practical books, there are perhaps none which are so interesting, or of which the influence is more powerful and salutary, than those which give the lives and characters of pious men. We are excited to emulate and imitate them; we sympathise in their feelings of devotion, and their hopes of immortality; and thus gain some strength to our own. By their failures, we learn our dangers; by their struggles with temptation, we are taught how to resist our own. We cannot but feel animated while we trace the gradual advances of a servant of God, frail and tempted like ourselves, in piety and virtue; when we see him striving, feebly indeed, but patiently and successfully, against the power of sin, and at last leaving this world of trial with joy and entering into glory. Their characters encourage us in the christian course, and we cannot turn from them without feeling much within, that prompts us to go and do likewise."

These are the words of Mr Abbot in one of his sermons, and they form a suitable preface to the following notice of his life and character.

John Emery Abbot was the son of Benjamin Abbot, L L. D., Principal of the Phillips Academy in Exeter, N. H., and was born in that town on the sixth day of August, 1793. He seems to have been destined to the ministry from his very birth. His mother, whom he is said to have greatly resembled, and who lived but a few months after his birth, solemnly dedicated him to God before her death. The knowledge of this circumstance made an impression on his mind, and he seems never to have lost sight of his destination. His religious character commenced early; he probably never knew the time when he was destitute of religious impressions. The same amiableness of disposition and gentleness of demeanor marked his childhood, which characterized him when a man, and made him then, as he was always, an object of more than ordinary interest to those who knew him. "While in the Academy," says one of his schoolmates, "no one regarded him as capable of doing wrong; we looked on him as a purer being than others around him."

He completed his classical education at Bowdoin College, in Brunswick, Maine, and was graduated with reputation in 1810, at the early age of seventeen. His college life appears to have been of a piece with his whole existence, unassuming and exemplary. At times, however, his diffidence and self-distrust oppressed him with the idea, that he should disappoint the wishes of his friends, and become a useless being. He has since told a friend, that so great at one period was his despondency, that he would willingly have exchanged all his future hopes and prospects for the certainty of a living as a schoolmaster in some remote village; the office of a clergyman, although from his earliest recollection the object of his most ardent desires, appearing to him a situation of too much dignity for him to aspire to.

After leaving college, he soon commenced his preparation for the holy work to which his heart was devoted, and pursued his theological studies partly at the University

in Cambridge, and partly under the direction of the Rev. William E. Channing, in Boston. This term of preparatory discipline passed with great diligence and fidelity. Religious truth was dear to his mind, and he entered with interest into those inquiries which are necessary to ascertain and define it, and without which the mind of a theologian is unfurnished. But there was one part of the ministerial preparation to which he attached supreme importance, and to which consequently his principal attention was directed. He thought the *religious character* of infinitely greater moment than all other qualifications of talents or acquirements. He had an extraordinary reverence for the sacred office, and dreaded above all things a diminution of that personal interest in religion, which alone can fit one for it, or make him useful in it. He believed, that the knowledge of human nature and of the modes of addressing and moving the conscience, which might be gained from the habitual study and discipline of his own heart, would be far more important to himself and to his flock, than laborious researches into some subjects connected with theology, which might make him more learned, but would be in danger of making him cold. And therefore, upon the principle that the affections are worth everything to a religious man, and especially to a minister, it was his favorite aim and object to keep them alive. His wish was to be a good and useful, and never to be a great man; to this single object he bent his fine powers, and girded himself, like his master, to go about doing good. There was no selfish ambition in any of his plans; they all centered in the supreme desire to become a good minister. How much he had this at heart, and what his favorite views of the profession were, may be seen from the following extract of a letter, written just before he began to preach.

"How soon I shall be presented for approval, I know not exactly. As I draw nearer the close of my course, I feel a greater importance to be thrown into the little time which remains before its termination. And the more I

reflect, the more solemn appears the office of a shepherd of the christian flock. To enlighten the ignorant with truth, to guide the wandering and the doubting, to give hope to the penitent and consolation to the sorrowing, and to arouse the sleep of the sinner, is indeed a blessed, but a most responsible office; and it seems the more solemn when we think that it is committed to '*earthen vessels*'—who themselves are ignorant and wandering, surrounded with temptations, darkened by error, and polluted with sin. It is a most animating thought, that he, who promised to his apostles, 'Lo, I am ever with you,' forsakes not their feeble successors."

His sentiments and feelings in regard to his profession are yet more fully discovered in a letter written just after he began to preach. "I am, as you may suppose, now in a state of feeling and views, to which life has never before called me. I look to the profession which God has now permitted me to assume, with a kind of solemn delight, when I think of the magnitude of its object, the weakness of its instrument, and the promised aid from above. There is a thought which often affects me, when I remember that all my life, all the labors, and opportunities, and powers I have received, are now to be devoted and consecrated to him who gave and has continued them. There is a sort of elevation which considerations like this sometimes create, which if I could bear with me to the world, I should be most happy. The evil is, that feeling often is kindled and expires in the closet, and when we go forth to the world, we must act only from the cold principles which reason has matured, and the habitual dispositions which time has freed from all enthusiasm.—It has always seemed to me a most wise provision with regard to our constitution, that we gradually and imperceptibly become conformed to circumstances, and when called to a new situation, the way is prepared to it by slow degrees. I expected a sort of overpowering feeling, in first commencing the sacred duties, but when I first entered the desk I felt composed and calm."

In another letter he writes thus. "By these active duties I hope to acquire a habit of more energy, and to gain something of practical wisdom, and to become a better member of society, and minister of the hopes and comforts of the gospel to the poor and sorrowing. My dear ———, what a holy and glorious profession has God permitted me to assume! I feel that it is a blessing for which I can never be grateful enough. Its duties seem to be those of the good spirits who are messengers of mercy and love to us; bearing consolation to the afflicted, and hope to the desponding, and warning to the wanderer, and animation and peace to the humble and penitent. I often feel that my earlier anticipations of the happiness of the profession are indeed surpassed."

With such views of the profession in which he was to labor, he entered upon its duties. With his talents, preparations, and earnestness, he could not fail to be acceptable, and he won many hearts and left deep impressions in the several places to which he was called to preach. There was no parade of oratory, no effort for effect, nothing done for display; but his simple, unaffected, and serious style of preaching, with the uncommon purity and solemnity of his devotional exercises, excited the best sort of interest, while his exemplariness as a man, and devotedness to duty gave the promise of usefulness to the people with whom he should be united. When the pulpit of the North Church in Salem became vacant, by the death of the venerable Dr Barnard, the eyes of his people turned at once to Mr Abbot as his successor. He preached to them, became acquainted with them, and was ordained as their minister on the 20th of April, 1815.

The trials of a clergyman's life are never small to a conscientious man, and in the place to which Mr Abbot was called, they were on some accounts peculiarly great. He succeeded an aged and experienced minister, who had gained the full confidence and affection of his flock by his intimacy and fidelity in pastoral duty. Mr Abbot's own

inclinations and views were such as would lead him also to pay peculiar attention, and devote a large share of time, to this, the most trying and difficult part of ministerial labor. He had come to a large parish when not twentytwo years of age, with but little experience, and oppressed with a sense of responsibility. But he showed himself to be equal to the charge. "Young as he was," says one who knew him well, "he discovered at once the wisdom and prudence, which we should suppose could be the result of experience only." He secured to an uncommon degree the respect and attachment of his people, and his love for his calling soon amounted, as he himself expressed it, almost to a passion. As far as was practicable he made himself personally known to every individual, interested himself as a friend in their welfare, was by their side in perplexity and sorrow, and ready to make any sacrifices of personal ease for the sake of their good. At the same time he pursued his studies with diligence, and made especially the preparation of his sermons for the pulpit an object of chief attention. These were distinguished for the judgment with which the most impressive thoughts were selected and arranged, for great affectionateness and earnestness of address, and for a style of uniform neatness, purity, and beauty. He wrote much besides them to assist himself in the course of his religious inquiries, but not with a view to publication, and engaged but little in studies not connected with his profession, though he was a good classical scholar, and always fond of elegant literature.

His frame was too feeble to support this various load of cares. He had never been robust; and the duties which he pursued with so much ardor, insensibly diverted his attention from the care of himself. In the spring of 1817, his health was evidently impaired; and a little cough, which seemed alarming to some of his friends, but too slight to attract his own attention, followed him through the summer. In October he took a little journey to the south, which injured instead of benefiting him. He felt it his duty,

feeble as he was, to preach in the Unitarian church at Philadelphia. On his return, the weather was cold and stormy; he took a severe cold which settled upon his lungs with a violent cough, and was accompanied with bleeding. Fearing lest he should become too weak to reach home, he pressed on with injudicious rapidity. On the day after his arrival in Salem, the first Sabbath in November, he preached to his people. The weather was tempestuous. His utterance was interrupted by a perpetual cough; and the service of the holy communion, which he administered for the last time, was a season of distress to his church, and full of the saddest forebodings. He was too ill to attend worship in the afternoon, and from that time appeared to be in a settled decline. During the winter he was confined to his chamber, and principally to his bed; his weakness was extreme; his voice only a whisper; and he believed himself to be a dying man. But there was nothing in him of distress, agitation, or gloom; he was the same tranquil and cheerful man that he had been in health. His unwillingness to speak of himself, and his aversion to talking much of what was passing within him, which was always a prominent trait in his modest character, prevented his conversing much, or to many persons, of his feelings and prospects. He knew that religion did not consist in being forward to tell the secrets of the soul. He did not conceal, however, from those who had a right to know his thoughts, that he thought his days were numbered. To a friend, who often watched with him, he spake frequently without reserve; dwelt upon the thought of dying, with perfect calmness; expressed with energy the satisfaction and peace which he derived from the views of religion which he had imbibed and preached; and especially from those affectionate and confiding sentiments respecting the essential goodness of God, which had always laid at the foundation of his piety and hope.

On the approach of spring, appearances were more favorable, and he removed to Exeter. There he spent the

summer with his parents, and his strength was so far restored that he contemplated a return to his ministerial labors in the autumn. A letter, which he wrote in July to an intimate friend, presents a beautiful exemplification of his habitual piety. "I think," he says, "that I gain strength, and now cannot but rejoice in the hope, which for so long a time I felt it necessary to check as it rose, of being again permitted to minister the gospel to my beloved people. In this restoration, I see the direct agency of Him, who first breathed into me the breath of life; the skill of man and the powers of medicine seemed all in vain; it was *his* air, the warmth of *his* sun, the bright and cheering prospect of the earth which *his* goodness quickened and beautified, which thus far have dispelled the damps of disease, and enkindled the feeble and dying flame within me. I suppose that every person, when restored from sickness, flatters himself that the feelings of piety, which deliverance awakens, will not decay. God grant that mine may be as permanent and influential as they ought to be!"

In another letter he speaks of his attendance on public worship, which he was just able to renew. "I could not help my mind from wandering much away, and being filled with recollections of the past years of my own life; for I had not been present at the ordinance since that distressful day, when I last met our own church at the altar. I think there is no time when the heart more expands towards all present or distant, whom God has made dear to it, than when commemorating that greater friend, whose love was stronger than death."

But the approach of autumn proved these flattering expectations to be delusive. His cough, which had never left him, became again alarming, and it was thought expedient that he should spend the winter in a warmer climate. He acquiesced in the measure, but did not greatly desire it. "Life for its own sake," he said, "was scarcely worth preserving at such a price; but he was not his own; and he felt it to be a duty to use every means which presented a

hope that he might be restored to his people." On the eighth of November, he sailed for Havana, to spend the winter with a friend in that place. But all hope of benefit from this step was disappointed. His voyage was rough and fatiguing; and although, as he very gratefully acknowledges in his journal, every possible attention was paid to his accommodation and comfort, he yet suffered much. "Upon the whole," he writes after his arrival, "I have been disappointed in regard to the voyage. My cough is somewhat increased, and my strength lessened." His residence upon the island was not more salutary. The kindest attentions of devoted friends were vain. It was found hazardous for him to remain within the walls of the city, and he quitted the hospitable dwelling of the old friend with whom he at first resided, for a lodging among strangers in the country. He felt that nothing had been gained, and he sometimes said so; but no complaint escaped his lips, no look of discontent overspread his countenance. And when it was mentioned as a subject of regret that he had quitted his country, he said, "By no means; he considered it the peculiar appointment of Providence, and, whatever might be the event, he would not alter a single circumstance if he could."

During his residence in Cuba, there was not a day, says the friend who accompanied him, that he was not a subject for home and a nurse; yet his mind was tranquil and active as when in health. He commenced a journal upon leaving home, which he continued until increasing weakness compelled him to relinquish it thirteen days after his arrival. From this a few passages are appended to the Memoir. What he wrote is minute in its descriptions of scenes and events, and shows that he was alive to all around him, and could observe and reflect as he always did. His remarks upon the character and influence of the Roman Catholic superstitions; upon the state of morals; and upon the evils which result from making the Sabbath a day of amusement; are highly creditable, and almost wonderful, when it is con-

sidered that he was so feeble as to be entirely exhausted by the effort required to write a few pages. But he was one who never would suffer the opportunity of improving his mind or heart to pass by. He formed an acquaintance with several Friars of distinction, with whom he conversed in Latin by means of a pencil; one of whom, of superior rank and fortune, became greatly attached to him, and daily exchanged visits. Through him he was received with hospitality at the convent of which he was a member, obtained access to the library, with liberty to borrow books, and was requested to visit freely at all times. He visited the prison, the slave-market, and the burial place of Americans, where he attended the funeral of a young man, a fellow passenger, and other similar places of suffering. When the fatigue attendant on such exertions was named to him, he replied, that it was the duty of a clergyman to make himself familiar with such scenes, as they fitted him for the better discharge of his duty. So much had he at heart the one object of being a useful minister.

But the increasing heat of the weather soon rendered it impossible for him to take the necessary exercise, and his strength hourly decayed; when, in one of those sudden changes to which the climate is subject, but against which man has made insufficient provision, he took a severe cold which threatened a speedy termination to his sufferings. As soon as he was a little relieved, he embarked for Charleston, S. C. The sea breeze in some degree restored his appetite and strength; and when he arrived, the sensation, which every one feels on treading again his native shore, gave a stimulus to his exhausted frame, which he mistook for returning health. He immediately found kind and devoted friends, though he came to them a stranger, and received every comfort which the most affectionate and tender sympathy could bestow. But he soon found that his feelings had deceived him, and his spirits sunk for a moment under the pressure of disease, and disappointed hope, and the delay in returning home, occasioned by the lateness of the New

England spring. On it being remarked to him that he was in low spirits, he answered, "No; not in low spirits, but sober. I think it very doubtful whether I am ever any better, and it is time for me now to consider myself a stranger and pilgrim on earth." He would often say, "O that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest." He sometimes regretted the distraction of mind produced by travelling, and said there was great justice in the remark of Jeremy Taylor, that "no one can be devout who leads a wandering life." The thought of dying was evidently familiar to him. As he was riding one fine morning, he applied to himself the lines written by Michael Bruce, just before his death :—

> Now spring returns—but not to me returns
> The vernal joy my better years have known;
> Dim in my breast life's dying taper burns,
> And all the joys of life with health are flown.

Yet in the midst of a weakness and languor which might have excused him for attending exclusively to himself, he engaged in teaching the slave, who waited upon him, to read.

When the weather became hot in the middle of April, he left Charleston, and reached Philadelphia by packet on the 22d, so much reduced that it was thought doubtful whether he could live to reach home. His father and several friends met him there. Their presence produced a temporary exhilaration of spirits, but his strength was rapidly decreasing, and from that time he could speak only in a whisper. "But," said he, in a letter written at this time, "we will rejoice together that God has preserved us in the land of the living; and I will be happy, whatever may now await me, in the thought that my wanderings are done, and I am again in my own home."

He arrived in Exeter, at the abode of his parents, in June. During the summer his decline was certain but gradual. He had too long contemplated the event to be moved by it. His

whole demeanor remained collected and tranquil. There was a quietness in his manner, a placid gentleness in every look and word which came from him, which discovered that death had no terrors to sadden or deject him, and that nothing now remained but to withdraw his interest from earthly things, and "prune his flight for heaven." The desire to save others from pain, which had always been characteristic of him, prevented him for a long time from speaking of his death to the friends who were with him, and made him reluctant to convey even by anything in his manner, that he thought himself so near his departure. But about a fortnight before his death, he expressed to his father his belief that all prospect of recovery was past; said, that he had long since relinquished hope; that he had wished to live that he might be useful to his parish, and that he might be instrumental in communicating religious instruction to his brother and sister; but he was convinced that for the wisest and best reasons this was not permitted, and he perfectly acquiesced. After this disclosure his mind seemed relieved. Everything indicated composure of spirit and a quiet waiting to be gone. He was for the most part spared much pain, and the powers of his mind remained perfectly unimpaired. During the last week of his life he listened occasionally, in the little time in which his extreme exhaustion would suffer him to command his attention, to passages from the Bible and other pious books; and never omitted his habit of retiring to his devotions, till a few days before his death. Two days previous to that event, he made a memorandum in writing of several little things, which he wished to leave as remembrances to some of his friends; and renewed the request, which he had made on leaving the country, that a certain part of his library, containing his most valuable theological books, should be given to his church for the use of its future ministers.* In the night of October 6th his

* The following is a memorandum which he made when he sailed for Havana:

"I wish to leave all those books, which are marked in the catalogue

complaints increased, and his dissolution was evidently near. Toward morning he passed through a severe paroxysm of pain, and his breath afterward grew shorter. He called his brother to him, and bade him look upon him, and see what religion would do for man at the hour of death. When the moment of his departure came, he was sensible of its arrival, and calmly said, "Mother, I am going to leave you." He kissed her, and said, "Where is my father?" To him also he gave a parting kiss, and then, looking up to heaven, pronounced in an audible, distinct voice, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." No other words were heard but the ejaculation, "Blessed Jesus—" He requested to remain quiet, and his eyes were still raised, as in prayer, when he gently ceased to breathe.

I have been thus minute in the details of Mr Abbot's life, because it appeared to me that his character could be fairly drawn only by thus making it speak for itself. A formal description of it would convey but a general and faint idea of what he was, and be quite insufficient in liveliness and truth. His was strictly, and without mixture, a religious character. There appeared in him a peculiar maturity of those graces, which distinguish the christian from all other morality. He might well be called, in that expressive phrase which Dr Buchanan has recorded, "A MAN OF THE BEATITUDES." You saw upon the slightest acquaintance, that he had formed himself with care on the example of his Master, and that it was his aim to be always like him gentle, meek, humble, and tranquil. His natural dispositions and temper were undoubtedly good; he neither exemplified nor believed the doctrine of man's original depravity. His mind was finely strung, and its powers nicely balanced; and God seems to have given him no strength of passion, except sensibility. His sensibility was acute and delicate. Perhaps

which I handed you, to the North Society, for the use of their pastor for the time being. In this way I hope that when I shall speak to my beloved people no more, I may still, in a remote manner, be doing good to them and to their children."

of this part of himself he was not sufficiently master; but it contributed to make him a very interesting man. It imparted glow and ardor to his friendship, and made his attachments strong and pure. It gave him great zeal in his religion, and probably influenced him to consider it, so much as he did, a matter of the affections. He valued its purifying, elevating, and consoling influence on the heart, as the great object and design of the gospel. He could not bear that it should run into literary or metaphysical speculations, or be wasted upon anything which has a tendency to cool the fervor of the spirit, or repress the warmth of the affections. But there was nothing of extreme animation, nothing loud and furious in his fervor. Religion was emphatically with him *the still, small voice;* all within and without obeyed it, but without any bustle or ostentation; it was always sober and calm, except when occasionally it excited to excess the gentler emotions, and checked his utterance, and found vent in tears. This, which describes his general character, is a description also of his preaching. He perhaps never was vehement, and seldom touched the strings of the stronger passions; but he always interested you, and his sentiments came upon your soul like the mild fanning of a sweet breeze, and you forgot to ask whether he was eloquent; and you perceived how much he was engaged, not by the power of his declamation or the violence of his gesture, but by the quivering of his lip, and the filling of his eye, and his interrupted utterance.

These qualities rendered him particularly engaging in the pastoral duties of his office. His tenderness and sensibility soothed those whom he visited in trouble, and rendered him deservedly dear to his flock; while the evident sincerity and depth of his piety wrought as an example to promote their devotion; teaching them, by his own devout and serious, yet cheerful deportment, to make religion the constant and intimate friend of their lives. His devotedness to them was great. He made their interests his own, and appeared to have no wishes, pursuits, or plans, with which they were not

associated. A separation from them was the only subject on which he could not speak to the last without emotion. Of death he conversed calmly; but when he thought of his people he was moved. "On this subject," (he says, in a letter from Charleston, March 3, 1819,) "I must think and feel in silence. I have not yet sufficient self-command to speak to any one of my fears and hopes; and hardly dare trust myself yet to look steadily forward to the possibilities of the future. Before I was sick, perhaps I might have had more firmness of heart; but the numberless and unexpected expressions of kind interest which the season of my calamity has called forth from those, whose affections I desired most earnestly to conciliate, have created and nourished feelings, which I can never lose, and strive as yet in vain rightly to regulate." His sensibility upon this topic remained, when every other earthly object seemed to be merged in the thought of heaven; and the constant, kind, and delicate attentions of the people he so much loved, were in the highest degree grateful and soothing.

It is not strange that to such a man his friends should be warmly attached; and the energy with which they speak of him, forms the most unsuspicious eulogium of his worth. They seem to labor for expressions that shall adequately convey their sense of his excellence. Even they who knew him from infancy, who have been familiar with him at every period of his life, who were grown when he was a boy, and have watched the whole progress of his character, regard him with a sort of veneration, as if he were a purer being than commonly visit earth. Such is the fascinating power of a character consistently religious!

Habitual and fervent piety was his ruling principle. It was this which gave its complexion to his whole character. To those who knew him, it betrayed itself in the tone of his manners and conversation, and his letters are full of the proofs of it. We may quote, as a specimen, one passage from a letter written before he began to preach. "When I look back upon my life, it is not without wonder at the good-

ness of Providence in constantly raising up, in every situation, some kind and good friend. From the time when my early footsteps were guided in the way of holiness, and my infant knees bowed in prayer by the best of parents, it seems as if I had been a peculiar object of mercy, in giving me at every period of life some one to guide, counsel, and make me happy. It is a most consoling thought, that, though *I* cannot recompense, there is One who suffers not the giving of a cup of water to pass unnoticed and unrewarded; and a most delightful thought, that we shall recognise in heaven the friends who have blessed us on earth."

It was this settled trust in God and the perfect wisdom and goodness of his providence, which supported his perpetual evenness of disposition, and gave him so much resignation and cheerfulness in the long trial of his sickness, and his weary approach to the tomb. During his voyage, when his nights were made restless by his cough and boisterous weather, his mind, he said, was tranquillized by the recollection of passages from the Psalms; and he remarked on their wonderful adaptation to every season and circumstance of affliction. He mentioned also the pleasure he took in repeating that beautiful hymn of Mrs Steele, which begins thus:

> O Lord, my best desires fulfil,
> And teach me to resign
> Life, health, and comfort to thy will—
> And be thy pleasure mine.

The sentiment of this hymn expresses the habitual temper of his mind.

I do not believe that he had a particle of asperity in him. He indulged no ill will; he would not willingly hurt the feelings of the meanest, and never allowed himself to feel uncharitably towards those who differed from him. He was truly liberal. Although perfectly decided in his own opinions, and in his aversion to some systems as corruptions of the gospel, and of injurious tendency, yet he unfailingly spoke of those who held these views with tenderness and respect. He allowed them readily the excellences that

belonged to them, and found pleasure in commending where commendation was due.

The views of religion, on which a character so truly christian was built, and to which he held with unaltered and even increasing satisfaction to the last, were simple and unperplexed. He loved to regard the gospel as a gift to all men of every condition and capacity, which the simplest might understand, and every one alike practice. Its great, important, essential doctrines, he believed to be very few and very plain, and grieved that they should have been so much darkened by words without knowledge. In accordance with this, he observed, after his partial recovery from his first confinement, that the truths, which he then found important to him, were exceedingly few; and that, to which he clung for support, when from extreme debility his mind was incapable of retaining another idea, was, that salvation had come to him by Jesus Christ.

He was a Unitarian upon principle and from inquiry. He believed the doctrine of the single and unapproached supremacy of the Father, to be a clear and most important doctrine of revealed religion. He honored Jesus as the Son and messenger of God, and believed that he had an existence before he entered our world. His preaching was full of the language of gratitude and veneration towards him. He delighted to dwell on the delineation of his character and offices, and to hold up his excellence to love and imitation. The blessings of his mediation and intercession were among his favorite topics, and he was fond of attributing a peculiar and powerful, though undefined, efficacy to his sufferings and death. Hence these were his frequent themes, and he pursued them with great glow of feeling. But his *worship* he reserved for the Father, as the origin and foundation of all. Him he delighted to contemplate and celebrate in his paternal character. His goodness, universal and impartial, he believed to be essential to his perfection and glory, and was perpetually displaying it in his preaching to the adoration and love of his people. He had no belief that He had formed

any being necessarily evil, and incapable by nature of pleasing him; or that he suffers men to come into existence subject to a corruption which they cannot remove; on account of which they are to perish for ever, except He please of his own mercy to prevent it; a mercy which He will exert only in favor of a few elect. He knew that the scriptures did not teach him this, he felt that reason and conscience and the affections of the heart revolt from it, and he was sure that it appeared to attribute a dishonorable government to the God of mercy. He, on the contrary, believed that all men are placed on an equal footing, to be tried with an impartial trial, and judged with an impartial judgment; that none are excluded from the benefits of the gospel; and that nothing but an abuse of the means, which are put in every man's power, can deprive any one of that immortality for which he is created. Hence his preaching was affectionate; he endeavored to move by representations of the astonishing goodness and mercy of God, and to win by accents of kindness. He did not neglect, however, to urge the terrors of the Lord. But he did it as "a strange work," with a faltering voice and quivering lip, and was once so affected by the subject that his emotion obliged him to pause and recover himself.

His views of the christian life were exceedingly exalted, and he insisted upon a very pure and rigid standard of moral excellence. "It seems to me," he says, "that very much of the want of religious principle and conduct among men is owing to their want of conviction how hard it is to become a sincere and obedient follower of Christ. We are apt to think too little of the extent and variety of religious obligations, and the difficulties and trials, the sorrows and temptations, which render it so necessary to work with earnestness. We are in no danger of exerting too much self-denial, or maintaining too unearthly a temper, for we are called upon to be *perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect*." In accordance with these sentiments he was accustomed to say, that the main reason why men are no better is, that they think it so easy to be good.

The dependence of future felicity on character, and the manner in which the gospel prepares for it, is so well stated in the following paragraph, and was so important in its influence upon his whole religious system, that we cannot forbear the gratification of copying it. It is from a letter without date.—"The design of all the obedience which the gospel requires, of its precepts, rules, and spirit, is to form us to a certain character, to certain habits and feelings, which are the *qualifications* for a spiritual state hereafter. When we think of the present world, it is evident, that in order to rightly discharging the services relating to it, in order to enjoy the blessings and comforts it yields, we need a peculiar kind of character,—a character *adapted* to this world. It is thus with regard to a future state; in order to be qualified for its services and joys, we need to have certain habits, dispositions, capacities,—without which, we should be unqualified to perform its services, or share its joys. Death makes no change in our character,—it only alters the *state* of our existence; and we shall enter a future world with the same habits, feelings, tempers, with which we departed from this. And the great design of the gospel is, by enjoining certain acts, and inculcating certain dispositions, to train us up to that character, which is meet for the inheritance of the saints."

It would be easy to go on and multiply extracts, which should make still more complete the delineation of his character and opinions; but it is time to forbear. The memory of what he was can never pass away from the minds of his friends and people; and we have done enough perhaps in our endeavor so to make him known, as shall promote the interests of religion.

EXTRACTS FROM A JOURNAL AT HAVANA.

HAVANA, DECEMBER 3d.

OWING to the impossibility of getting our baggage on shore before yesterday, and to the constant excitement of the last day of our voyage, which prevented my writing, I must now sum up in short compass the events of the past few days. On Friday, about 4 P. M., the high lands of Cuba were first descried, stretching above the horizon like a faint line of clouds. It was not without emotion that I first caught a view of that strange land, now for a time to be my residence, and at last, perhaps, the resting place for my ashes. But I thought it wrong to indulge these melancholy feelings; and we spent our evening very pleasantly in talking about the new scenes which soon were to be displayed to us.

On the whole, I have been disappointed with regard to the voyage. It has had no beneficial influence on my general health; my cough is somewhat increased, and my strength lessened. I expected that the sea breeze would brace me, and increase my appetite; but the air was the most part debilitating, and my appetite was extremely feeble through the whole voyage. I could take no exercise: when there was wind the vessel heeled too much out of water, and in calmer weather, the heat of the sun would not permit it; and what little exercise I was able to take, fatigued rather than invigorated and cheered me. Our days passed over us with a sameness which was inexpressibly wearisome. We tried to read on deck; but the rolling often of the vessel, the dash of the waves, and the constant employment going on busily about us, prevented my paying sufficient attention to enable me to enter into the feelings and sentiments of either Waverley, the Rambler, or Jeremy Taylor. The Rambler

indeed furnished me more entertainment and instruction than any other book. The uniformity of the prospect all around us soon became tiresome. There was nothing to excite interest or repay attention. I was very much disappointed in the scenery of the ocean. There was nothing of that grandeur and majesty which I had expected, to fill my imagination. Having no points by which to measure distances, you become forgetful of the immense extent of waters which roll around you. I have been much more impressed with both the sublime and the beautiful aspects of the ocean, when standing on the beach at Hampton, or gazing on its billows from the precipices of Nahant or Sandy Bay, than with any seen from the ship. When calm, the appearance of the deep was tame to insipidity; and when swept by the winds, it seemed but a wild and horrible waste. At times indeed we saw a rainbow much broader and finer than any on land, formed on a cloud which hung low over the horizon; at times, when the waves ran high, you would see all the prismatic colors spread for an instant over the surface of some wave near you; the white crest, which rose and spent itself with the billow on which it rested, was always beautiful. These were but minute particulars. I saw no sunset so beautiful by far as very many which I witnessed from our parlor window in Exeter. Sometimes it went down a full and cloudless orb; and I was astonished that it did not then seem more majestic. At other times, when the clouds veiled it in part, it sunk too rapidly to give them that multitude of glorious hues, changing gradually into each other and fading slowly away, on which, in our northern climates, the eye may so long linger with delight. The most beautiful object we saw was the planet Venus, which we noticed once, as we were going below rather later than usual, shining with a fuller orb and a more resplendent brilliancy than we had ever before witnessed. I saw the moon rise but once; she then rose through clouds, and her light was soon obscured by the haziness of the atmosphere. The porpoise, and the

dolphin, so remarkable for the beautiful colors with which its skin is tinged as it dies, are generally seen, and often taken, in sailing to Havana. But the only fish which we saw were what the sailors call an "old wife," waggling its awkward course through the waves, and multitudes of flying fish mounting above them. The flying fish seemed to be about the size and form of our smelt; and its scales glistened in the sun with the same silvery brilliancy. It rises out of water a few feet, and moves rapidly about one hundred feet in general. Their flight continues till the sun and air have dried their wings, when they drop again into their proper element.

The kindness of Mr P. had provided every accommodation for us which could be furnished. M.'s state room opened into the cabin, which Mr S. and myself occupied. But the vessel, though excellent in every other respect, was not a comfortable one, on account of her lying so very much on her side. The captain considered her the most *crank* vessel, (which is the seaman's phrase to express this circumstance,) that he had ever met with; and seemed to me to be continually anxious lest in carrying no more than ordinary sail, some unpleasant accident should arise. We were exceedingly delighted with the whole economy of the vessel: the very kind manner in which the crew were treated,—a kindness in Capt. H. almost parental; and the cheerful alacrity with which every order was obeyed. I heard not a profane or angry word while on board; and there seemed a constant harmony, contentment, and good humor to prevail amongst the crew. We felt very deeply our obligations to Capt. H. and his mates, for their uniform and very attentive kindness towards ourselves. Everything was done which could be done to render our situation as comfortable and pleasant as possible.

On Saturday morning, (28th November,) as I was packing some loose clothing in my trunk, I heard a hoarse voice calling out high above me in an unknown tongue, and our captain stoutly answering in his native English. I ran on deck, and found that we were just doubling the small cape

or headland on which Castle Moro is situated ;—a moment more—and Havana with all its strange scenery—its walls of stone, its churches, its harbor filled with vessels of different nations, and jarring tongues—was opened at once to our view. The first view of the Moro was very impressive to us. The cliff on which it is built rises abruptly, almost perpendicularly from the waves, which roar, and dash, and foam at its feet. The castle is built of a ferruginous limestone, which forms in fact the foundation of this part at least of the Island of Cuba, and of which the walls of the houses are made. The Moro had the yellowish hue imparted by the iron, tinged here and there with greenness arising from moisture ; and on every little spot of earth which could find rest in the crevices of the stones or the roughnesses of the cliff, some vegetation was flourishing. At the extreme point of the headland—the corner of the castle—a round light house of stone is reared to the height of 110 feet above the level of the water. The light is fed by gas, prepared in a small house near the foot of the rock, and conducted by concealed passages to the lantern. This light, however, important as it is, is neglected as almost everything else is ; for the night on which we were near the harbor, no light was to be seen in the lantern, though the light of the lamps in the castle shone distinctly. The harbor of Havana is a small bay with a very narrow entrance. On the bank of the passage opposite the Moro, is another, smaller castle, which was not peculiarly interesting. But at a little distance from the Moro, and on the same side of the bay, is the Cavanas. It covers so great an extent that it is said all the inhabitants of Havana might find protection within its walls. If it were well garrisoned and provided, it would be impregnable. As it is, its power is feeble. It is built like the Moro, on a steep precipice of rock ; though around its base the vegetation and shrubbery are abundant. We recognised the aloe and prickly pear flourishing thickly in this neglected spot.

While we were waiting Mr C.'s arrival, Mr S. called me to observe on the point opposite to where we lay, a multi-

tude of negroes just brought in some slave ship, and now driven down to the shore to be washed. There seemed to be about 150 or 200 miserable beings, almost all of them quite young, some very small children; some were naked, and none had any other covering than a large piece of coarse dirty cloth, wrapt round them. They were driven over a bank of sharp, pointed stones, cringing at almost every step with pain; there were about a dozen men with clubs, apparently guarding them. We left them in this situation. Mr C. soon came on board; and in a short time we found ourselves under the roof of the most kind and affectionate friends. It is impossible to describe our sensations when we first passed through the streets, in going from the mole on which we landed to our dwelling place; all was so strange,—so utterly unlike any conceptions we had formed of the place, or any fancies we had ever entertained. The heavy stone walls and barred windows of every house, the loud jargon of an unknown tongue, the cries of fruit sellers, the strange figures and sights every instant changing to us, as we drove rapidly along the narrow, crowded, and dirty streets;—all seemed so wild, so dreamlike—that we knew not how to express the varying feelings which the scene excited. But it is not difficult to imagine the feelings with which we received the affectionate and most cordial welcoming of an old and beloved friend in this land of strangers and of wretchedness.

Thursday, 3d December, we observed as a day of thanksgiving, with our friends in New England. The vessels from Massachusetts, to the wonderment of the Spaniards, all hoisted their colors. Our friend Mr S., Mr H., and four Massachusetts captains, among whom was our Capt. H., Mrs G. with her husband, who both love the institutions of our country better than their own—dined with us. The turkey which we brought from Judge P.'s farm headed the table—(I say *the* turkey, for his companion, alas! had sunk under the fatigues of the voyage and the sorrows of his desolate condition)—and what with the turkey, a ham, plum pudding, apples,—all from New England; and Mrs P.'s cranberry

jelly, then opened in honor of the day—we had a true Massachusetts thanksgiving dinner. The occasion awoke many touching recollections of past days and of distant friends; and I could not but fancy that we were then remembered with an affection to which the day and our own situation had imparted some new tenderness and force.—We indeed had reason to be thankful from our very hearts to that gracious God, who had preserved us amidst the perils of the great deep; and now is blessing us with the kindest friends, and with all the accommodations and comforts which a situation like ours admits. In the evening Mr W. played a few psalm tunes, which some of the ladies sung. The first they attempted was "Love divine";—that sweet tune, which so often had soothed me in our own house of worship, and prepared the minds of my beloved people for our united prayers;—but now I remembered in all its force the lament of the Jews in Babylon—"How shall we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land! If I forget *thee*, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember *thee*, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." No associations to me are so strong as those which have connected themselves with music; and none so affecting as those which sacred hymns awaken.—Soon after, Padre Verdier, a friar of rank in the convent of San Domingo, came in. He often visits the family, and there is much reciprocal attachment. His dress was a gown of white woollen stuff, like bombazeen, girded about the middle; over which was a kind of cloak, of black bombazeen, which met over the breast, and was open below. The cowl hung over the back like a great cape; and in front was suspended his rosary. He is a man of large fortune, possessing a patrimony of $300,000 independently of his annual income from the various offices he sustains in the convent. One of his offices is "preacher to his majesty;" which makes it his duty alone on public occasions to pronounce a discourse. His manners are very gracious—those of a polished gentleman, and his conversation was very cheerful and easy. * * * *

On Saturday we went again to Mr G.'s with the intention of spending the night there. The morning was a remarkably fine one. Just as we were sitting down to dinner, a heavy cloud passed over us, from which the rain fell violently for a few minutes. It ceased ; and all at once a tremendous wind began to blow and to roar. It increased rapidly, and soon it was necessary to close up both doors and window-shutters ;—we had then no other light than what was furnished by candles and the chinks of the doors. It grew quite cold ; and I was for some time hardly warm enough, though clad in almost my winter's dress, with my hat on, (which, by the way, Mr G. and I for precaution's sake had never put off,) and covered with a surtout and a South American Indian thin blanket. We concluded early to go to bed as the most comfortable resort. Now all grew exceedingly anxious, for fear I should get cold in the night. Mr and Mrs S. insisted on relinquishing their room, and slept in the great hall ; and after blankets were nailed over the doors and windows, and all precautions which the most anxious kindness could provide, were taken, I went to my slumbers, which were refreshing and little disturbed, though the wind swept most heavily round us, and I could see the sky above me through one or two openings in the thatching. This wind the Havanerians term a norther ; and it was a more violent one than has occurred for a year or two.

Tuesday, 8th December.—Today is one of the great Catholic festivals. It commemorates the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, who alone, of all the human race, was, according to the true faith,* born unstained with original sin. The mass of Catholics seem to have no idea connected with a religious festival, but that of amusement or riot. Before day began, we were all roused from sleep by the thunder of cannon and the ringing of all the bells of the city. It had all the tumult of our Independent day morning ;

* Every one who receives the honors of knighthood swears particularly to defend this article of faith.

and this strange mode of honoring and propitiating the Virgin was repeated three times, I think, in the course of the day. There are very many festivals in the year ;—some marked in the calendar with a single cross, to be partially observed ; others marked with a double cross, which receive a full celebration : no public business can then be transacted, workmen leave their labor, and all classes give themselves to visiting, amusements, or tumultuous joy.

I walked a little way in the forenoon. We passed the door of a great gambling house, and I had some curiosity to see what was going forward within. Mr C. was with me, and we walked in. On one side, as we entered, was the barkeeper's stand, from which liquors were distributed ; and opposite was a billiard room, where a number of men were engaged in play. We went forward from this to a large court, surrounded with a piazza under which as many as fifty or sixty men were seated, at a range of tables, with each a slate, divided into columns, before him. In a little box, elevated from the floor, and in sight of all, a little boy was placed, with a brass globe before him, which he whirled rapidly round, and then drew from it some number, which he sung out in a peculiar and rather plaintive measure. In every interval, there was a most profound silence ;—when the number was announced, every one of the company marked it in one of the columns on his slate. The object of the game, I understood, was to fill some particular column ; but in what manner it was to be accomplished I could not learn. This game employs hundreds of persons without cessation. We live not far from the gaming-house ; and you hear the voice of the little boy who sings the number, every moment of the day,—not through the week days only, but on that day so sacred to us, as the season of holy rest, reflection, and praise. Yet there is no place where the laws are more severe against every kind of gaming, than in Havana. Not long ago, Mr C. says, two or three men had the direction and the income of three great gaming-houses. One of the men was appointed to the office of mayor of the city,

which gave him the right, and rendered it his duty, to suppress all places of that nature. His associates, to whom he was disagreeable, determined at this time to break terms with him, and carry on their gaming-houses, and receive their incomes alone. Their old partner, in his private capacity, entreated and threatened; but they obstinately persisted in terminating their partnership, and excluding him from his former source of profit. What private entreaties could not effect, public authority could: as mayor of the city, the protector of morals, he ordered the three gambling-houses instantly to be shut up; and they were not opened till their owners had made their peace with him, by admitting him again to a full participation of their profits. This shows the ease with which these fountains of wickedness might be closed up, as well as exemplifies the extent and fearlessness of official corruption in this miserable country. The corruption, known, acknowledged, and shameless, of the public officers here, if you can credit any part of innumerable stories told by respectable and veracious people, is great beyond description.

* * * Miralla came to me this morning, and said that Padre Verdier, with the "professor of the sacred text," wished to see me, in his chamber. I followed him, and was introduced to Padre Andrew, a tall friar, about fortyfive, high in reputation for learning, and of very courteous manners. The friars converse with great readiness and ease in Latin; but their pronunciation of the language is adapted to the Spanish, as ours is to the English language; and most of our conversation, whenever we have met, has been upon paper. Now, however, Miralla often interpreted the remarks of both, and conversation went on without difficulty. I happened to have the German edition of Griesbach's New Testament with me, which I showed to the professor, with the remark, that it is this text which is principally used in America; when to my astonishment I found what Miralla had told me, to be true, that neither friars nor priests know a word of Greek. It seemed strange indeed that the pro-

fessor of sacred text in the university of the convent of friars, confessedly the most learned, that of the Dominicans, should be perfectly ignorant of the original text,—of everything but the vulgar translation of his own church. The professor looked hard at the title page of the testament, and turned over its leaves, and then handed it again to me, saying that "he presumed it did not or could not differ from the Vulgate." I answered, "paucis in locis,"—in a few places;—but Miralla, whose heresy comes near to free thinking, mischievously exclaimed, "in plurimis, plurimis locis,"—in very many, many passages; and triumphantly turned the fathers to the disputed text of 1 John, v. 7, which he told them was omitted in the testament I had shown them. The friars looked rather blank at this, and asked Miralla why it was done; which he answered, not apparently to their satisfaction, by appealing to the want of MSS. authority. Padre Andrew then turning to me, asked "how the doctrine of the trinity was to be proved, if that text were omitted." I said, that "that doctrine was thought to be proved by a comparison of various passages of scripture." "But," said the friar, "if the doctrine be true, why omit the text?" Here Miralla took up the affair, and labored long to explain that the doctrine contained in the words might be true; and yet it might not be true, that the words themselves were written by an apostle. The distinction did not appear to be comprehended very well; and the professor, turning again to me, renewed the inquiry,—on what grounds we omitted the text. I knew no simpler way of answering, than by pointing to the long dissertation on the subject at the end of Griesbach, which the friar looked at attentively for a moment, and then returned it, and would have changed the conversation. But Miralla insisted on expounding the whole passage to them, endeavoring to prove, from the 6th and 8th verses together, the doctrine of the simple humanity of our Saviour. I feared the friars were angry a little in the dispute, but soon found it was only the usual vehemence of Spanish gesticulation. After a little more quite pleasant conversation, and the ex-

change of good wishes, we parted, under the engagement that the next morning I should call on them at their cells and visit the library of their convent.

When they had left us, I expressed my astonishment to Miralla, that he should thus dare to assault the true faith, and treat its ministers with such lightness and freedom. He said that with very few he should dare to take so great liberties; but that these gentlemen, besides being his personal friends, were the most learned and most liberal of their order. The Dominicans are regarded as the most learned body of friars in the country; but their theological learning extends, I understand, not beyond the works of the authorized expositors of the Vulgate text, the writings of some of the fathers, and the subtle disquisitions of the Angelical Doctor, St Thomas Aquinas, and his mystical brethren. The two friars whom I had met were very favorable examples of the liberal clergy of the country. The monastic orders, Miralla tells me, and he knows them perfectly, are miserably ignorant on every subject.

I went in the afternoon to see the Franciscan church and convent. It covers, I believe, more ground than any establishment of the kind, but I did not learn its exact extent. There was no one but the servants in the church, so that we could examine it at leisure. There were four altars on each side, beside the grand altar at the further extremity of the church. The altars were elevated about four feet—they looked like misshapen, dirty, old-fashioned bureaus without drawers. Four or six pillars, covered with gilding and tinsel ornaments, rose up by the wall behind the altars from the floor to the roof. The spaces between the pillars were filled with pictures and statues of the Virgin, our Saviour, and various saints. Directly over every altar is a large, wooden figure of some saint, all of whom Miralla knew and named by some peculiarity of dress or appearance. The saint occupies the chief place; and small waxen or wooden figures, either with or without the cross, represent the venerable form of Jesus Christ; the Virgin, too, with the infant in her

arms, found sometimes more than one place at every altar. As we walked up to the principal altar, which alone is in a recess, I observed two wooden figures, large as life, miserably carved and painted, supported on brackets high from the floor, and in an attitude approaching each other. These were the apostles Peter and Paul: the former carried the keys; and under St Paul was inscribed—probably to mark his inferiority—the words of penitence in which he lamented the errors of his earlier life—"I am the least of all the apostles, and am not worthy to be called an apostle," &c. The principal altar is elevated above the floor by six or eight steps; all of which were now filled closely up with candlesticks, nearly of my height, in which were wax candles six feet high, all lighted, in honor of the Virgin, a picture of whom, with a smirking face and a silver glory, fronts you as you approach the altar. I find it in vain to attempt describing the interior of the Catholic churches: so numberless particulars whose union alone affects the eye, such profuse variety of images and gaudy decorations, none of which alone are worthy of remark—that I feel that I can give no distinct idea of what I saw. The only feelings which the whole parade excited were those of deep sadness and disgust,—and then of gratitude to God that I was born a Protestant. The floors of the churches are not divided as with us, into pews;—the whole space is open: a few long benches alone furnish the means of rest to those who chance to enter the church before mass has commenced. Close to several of the massy pillars which support the roof, I observed several chairs, with high wicker-work back and sides. These were the confessional chairs. Here the priest seats himself, and the penitent whispers his crimes or his follies, and receives his absolution. In the mean while people walk about as much as they please, provided they come not so nigh the chair as to overhear what is said; but the confessor, if there be anything to excite laughter in the story of his penitent, does not feel it necessary to restrain himself, and is often seen shaking his sides in merriment.

We passed from the church to the convent, which, as is the case with that of St Domingo, and probably all others, adjoins immediately to the church, and is built in the form of a hollow square, three stories high, round the interior of which a piazza is built, and into which the single door of all the cells opens. The centre is occupied by a cistern. Bad pictures of the actions of their founders, or portraits of eminent men of their order, are hung along the walls. The only one which I now remember was hung on the staircase, and represented a huge giant, striding across the ocean, with a little child seated on his shoulders. Directly between his feet was a large plan of the city of Havana. This, Miralla told me, commemorates the giant Christopher, the guardian saint of the island, who once was met, as the legends say, by our Saviour, in the form of an infant, soliciting to be borne in the arms of the saint; which was readily granted, to the saint's immortal benefit and honor. It is to be remarked that the use of pictures as ornaments to their convents is forbidden to the monastic orders. We passed several of the friars, and they are seen continually in the street. They are seventy in number; and their dress is a loose, long, blue gown, tied about the middle with a white string. Their heads when covered are protected from the sun by a huge, broad-brimmed, white hat; shoes and stockings are forbidden; but they are contented with obedience to half the injunction. There are three divisions of the general order of Franciscans, who are characterized by some variety of dress, but who hold the same rules of discipline. All monastic orders are bound by three vows,—to *poverty*, *chastity*, and *obedience* to superior authorities; the points of belief in all are the same; and they differ from each other, only in their varying disciplinary precepts;—in the particular object to which each order professes to devote itself, as for instance one order to preaching, another to the care of the sick, a third to missionary labors, &c;—and in their modes of dress and appearance. These discriminating forms are all prescribed to each order in the particular precepts of its founder.

One of the peculiarities of the Franciscans is, that they subsist entirely by begging. The vow of poverty binds the individual only in other orders; the riches of the convent which supports them may be, and indeed generally are immense;—but the vow of the Franciscans obliges them to poverty both as individuals and as a fraternity. The vow, however, is not, I believe, regarded; the convent, if I understood aright, enjoying a respectable income from its funds.

When we left the convent, we rode about the city for half an hour, passing particularly through those streets in which churches were built. There is nothing in the least imposing or beautiful in the appearance of any one which I have seen. All are built of the same rough, dirty looking limestone, without, in many instances, any apparent attempt at symmetry of form. The two towers, for instance, which terminate the front of the cathedral, reputed the finest of the churches, are of very unequal sizes, and differ considerably in their architecture. No order of architecture seems aimed at, except occasionally, when you see a gothic door.

Leaving the city we rode to the Paseo, which is at a short distance from the walls. This is a public avenue, about half a mile in length, and wide enough for three carriages abreast; it is planted on each side with double rows of orange and lime trees; at each end is a dirty limestone fountain, and in the middle a statue of one of the Charleses of Spain. The trees, however, are too low, thin, and broken to afford any but a very imperfect shade; and we oftener find the fountains dry, than pouring forth their foul and muddy waters. The Paseo is the great scene of public display, for all the finery, fashion, and beauty of the city. Here the new volantes are first sported, and all the splendor of new jewelry and uncopied dresses is displayed. The exhibition takes place every day as soon after sunset as possible; but on Sundays and festival days the greatest "paseo" takes place. At this time a throng of volantes crowds toward the avenue, filled with persons in their richest suits, the ladies without covering of shawl or headdress of any kind, and the tapiset,

or high boot of the volante which screens them at other times, is now let down, that none may miss the opportunity of seeing and admiring. The carriages, as they arrive, fall into a line on the left, follow each other with the slowest step to the foot of the avenue, and return in the same order on the right. As the righters and lefters pass each other,—such a shaking of fans!—such bowings of heads!—such abundant smiles! As the object is merely to display and be seen, it is considered vastly impolite and vulgar for any to converse as they ride; and to suffer a volante to pass without looking straight and full into it, is a prodigious incivility. Thus all go round the circuit for an hour, and then the farce is over. On great days the paseo is exceedingly crowded; and as many as fifteen hundred volantes have often been seen at once on the parade ground, including the avenue itself and some part of the street in which it terminates. Stone seats are placed along the sidewalks; but these are altogether unfrequented, as it is quite unfashionable to walk. Dragoons are stationed in the riding ground to keep order; and today we found three bands of music ordered there in honor of the Queen dowager's birth-day. The air was damp, and I was wearied with sights, and we returned home before the paseo commenced.

10th December. We went to Padre Verdier's cell, where Miralla left me. The convent of San Domingo is built of the limestone so universally in use here, and is, I think, three stories high; but then one of its stories is more than double the story with us. With its church, it covers a square of about 360 feet. On the left hand as you enter the door by which I always passed in, stands a large wooden figure, wretchedly carved, painted white, with a crown of thorns upon its head, and the naked body stuck all over with tinsel ornaments and artificial roses. In the corner of the entrance adjoining, is the wooden figure of a female, dressed in flame colors, covered with tinsel, and crowned with a circlet of stars. This was the Virgin: her hands were held up in the posture of supplication, and her blowzy face turned

towards the figure of her son. Both are enclosed in glass cases, and both must be passed with tokens of religious reverence.—Passing through this entrance, you find yourself in a large, open court, one side of which is formed by the church, into which a door opens, and along the three remaining sides the cloisters and galleries run. The lower part of the wall on all sides is covered with very large and extremely coarse and ill-designed paintings, representing the chief events in the history of St Dominic. In one, the Virgin,—to whom, so far as I have observed, all instances of protection or deliverance are ascribed by the Catholics—is figured as interposing to preserve him from being beaten by some sailors, whose cudgels are lifted for that purpose; in another, she consoles him in apparent vision for an unmerciful flagellation he had inflicted on himself; here, he tears an infernal spirit in pieces who tempted him in the form of a dove; and there, he protects himself and his friends from injury, and puts bands of armed men to flight by holding on high the consecrated cross. In one picture, St Peter and St Paul appear to him, and after, according to the legend, praising him above all men, advise him to establish the monastic order which bears his name; and in the next picture, the Virgin herself brings to him a dress which she had chosen and fashioned for the new sect of monks, and which now forms the habit of the order.

This court is paved with marble slabs, though in its centre is a little spot on which one or two little withered trees once grew. A door opens immediately on your right as you enter this court, which leads you into a second, resembling it, except that it has no pictures on its walls, and a small well or fountain occupies its centre. The doors of the cells all open into this square. This morning was the first time I had been in a monastic cell; and how different from the cells of the fathers or of romance! P. Verdier's were the well furnished apartments of a man of the world. The room which I first entered was hung with pictures of English country life; and adjoining to this was his dressing and

sleeping room. We found our friend ready to receive me. Soon after us the prior of the convent came in. His authority is unlimited with respect to the concerns of the convent. "Ejus auctoritas est plena," P. Andrew told me, "in temporalibus et spiritualibus." He was a very benign looking man, about sixty, perfectly affable, and quite fatherly in his manners. His character was represented to me as irreproachable. He accompanied us to the library. This is contained in a fine large room, which to a Protestant would be one of its greatest commendations; as, with the exception of the writings of the Latin fathers, and I think translations of the Greek, the collection was made up almost entirely of the monkish commentators and ecclesiastical historians. I saw Calmet's Dictionary, Comment, and Dissertations—Lamy's Apparatus—Huet—some of Newton's mathematical works—Cicero in folio, and Tacitus;—beside these and an odd volume of Stephen's Latin Thesaurus, I do not remember seeing any work which I had ever seen or heard of before. There were no modern works; the books were all in vellum; and many of them deplorably worm eaten.* Excommunication is denounced at the door against any one who shall take away any volume from the library. We passed from the library to P. Andrew's cell, where we rested ourselves a little, and were treated with gin and water. Formerly, the friars took their meals in common; and this is in fact a standing rule of the order; but it was found inconvenient, &c; so that now each friar sends to an eating house for his dinner, and instead of silence and severe fare, may live as merrily and as luxuriously as he chooses. All indeed take the solemn vow of poverty; but the prior has the power, as P. Verdier told me—who, by the way, enjoys a property of $300,000—to permit the brethren to retain property under certain restrictions and for charitable ends.—The funds of the convent amount to about $3,000,000; but the annual income, owing

*I inquired what number of books the library contained; but none knew. There were not more than 1500, I should judge, if there were so many.

to the situation of the property, is at present but $40,000. The convent maintains fifty friars. On leaving the prior, I expressed a wish to be informed, as far as was proper, concerning the general regulations of the convent, its particular modes of discipline and of life; and he put a volume into my hand, which, he said, would inform me as to everything relating to the principal monastic orders. I read it, and have a few extracts from it; but the inconsistency between the rules which they profess to obey, and the actual manners of the monks, is most wofully glaring.

Connected with the convent, or rather constituting a part of its economy, is what the monks call a university; in which, P. Verdier told me, were taught these branches:—Theology, civil law, canon law, mathematics, philosophy including logic, ethics, metaphysics and physics, medicine, grammar, and the "jus regale." I asked to see the university rooms; and was shown into a hall, in which the officers were chosen, &c. This was the only room belonging to the university. I could learn nothing intelligibly with regard to its regulations; and presume the whole affair to be no more than this—that a certain number of the brethren are chosen to attend to the education of those children whose parents choose to entrust them to their care. Whether the students live within the walls, I know not; but as no evidence of it was seen, I presume they do not. On inquiring concerning the books studied, I was shown several of them, all of which were abstracts from Thomas Aquinas. This author indeed is, I might almost say, the sole teacher of the monks. P. Verdier told me that the five authors held above all others for authority in the Catholic church, are Jerome, Pope Gregory, (which pope they did not seem quite to know) Augustine, Ambrose, and Thomas Aquinas; but he added, that the latter was deemed alone sufficient to solve all difficulties and doubts. And in the constitutions of the monastic orders, it is enjoined most earnestly, "that they ever read, learn, and teach the doctrine of our angelical doctor, and according to that determine and settle all disputed points."

It is added at the close of the injunction, "whosoever shall depart from the sound doctrine of St Thomas Aquinas, and either by word or writing utter anything opposed to it, shall be deprived for ever of the office he may hold, and of all other rank or dignity." This is indeed continuing the ignorance of the dark ages. In one of the lower rooms of the convent is a library of one thousand volumes collected by a society and open to the public.

Sunday, 13th. In the afternoon rode beyond the walls with Mr C., and returned home on foot. When in the volante he offered to take me to the great resort of the negroes, that I might see how their Sunday was spent. We drove accordingly to a street formed on one side by the wall of the city, and on the other lined with low houses, which now were filled with negroes of all sexes and sizes, gambling, shouting, and dancing to a loud racket produced by beating boards and barrels, and occasionally a one-headed drum. The street was crowded, all dressed in their most dashing garments,—all laughing, talking, or singing. It was a scene of perfect uproar, and its noise you could hear at a great distance from the city. The houses are owned or hired by the free negroes; and here all, who are able to do it, hold their weekly assembly of vice and confusion. These probably are the spots in which schemes of villainy are contrived; and here probably, should ever an insurrection occur, will its elements be quickened and organized.

Sunday is indeed universally the day of amusement. There is no other service performed at the churches on that, than on any of the week days. Mass is performed at intervals from sunrise till twelve; and the rest of the day, by the religious themselves, is devoted avowedly to pleasure. They who have attended one mass have completely fulfilled their duty. As you walk through the streets you would never suspect it was a day of religious rest. The streets resound with the cries of negroes vending their wares, or playing with their companions; the shops are mostly open; you see much of the usual business going on; and meet at every step

volantes conveying visitors from one family to another. The theatre or opera of course are open; the gambling houses filled. As the sun goes down, all crowd to the Paseo, to see and be admired. There was no day of the week in which we found so little quiet and peace. It is literally and peculiarly the day of secular pleasure. In this the priests and the monks participate without reserve. One Sunday afternoon a great and continual uproar of shouting, singing, and laughing was heard at Mr C.'s; none for a time could imagine whence it could proceed; until a gentleman went on the azotea, a platform which opens from the hall, and commands a view of the monastery of St Domingo, and saw in one of the cells a large party of monks, military officers, and Spanish men assembled, enjoying themselves with the most riotous conviviality.—As the public offices are closed, the foreign merchants cannot carry on their business abroad, and their day is devoted either to the business of the counting-house, or the relaxation of riding or visiting. They do not attend mass. Indeed it would be idle and useless to do it. I went once from curiosity to the church of St Domingo. As each person came in, the ceremony of crossing with fingers dipped in consecrated water was gone through; after which they were seated, some on the floor, others on the single bench which was placed along by the pillars. Ladies (who, by the way, must always be clothed in black and veiled at mass) often came attended by servants, who spread small carpets on the floor for their mistresses to kneel or sit upon. After waiting some time beyond the appointed hour, a monk, followed by a black servant, came in to officiate. All crowded then round the altar at which the ceremony was to be performed. I was quite near. The priest repeated the prayers as fast as he could, and in a voice so extremely low that I was unable to distinguish one solitary word of the whole service. There was of course a continual crossing and kneeling on the part of the priest; with this the people had nothing to do; we all kneeled twice or three times only, but for what reason I know not, and probably few who at-

tended did know. Then a little bell was rung by the black man, and every body beat their breasts. The monk soon consecrated the elements, partook them himself alone, and dismissed the assembly. This was the whole service. None received the communion; none heard the prayers; and if they had been heard, none would have comprehended their import, for they were in an unknown tongue. But the Catholics departed, satisfied that they had been present at the holy sacrifice, had knelt at proper intervals, and beat their bosoms at the ringing of the bell.

SERMON I.

SERIOUSNESS.

PSALMS IV. 4.

STAND IN AWE, AND SIN NOT.

CHEERFULNESS of spirit and manners, is not merely an amiable grace, but a religious duty. We are called, as christians, to let our light shine before men, and by the influence of our example, to place religion in a conciliating and attractive point of view. The influence of christianity has doubtless been sometimes prevented and impaired by the repulsive austerity displayed by many of its sincere professors. In the animation and gaiety of early life, the young turn with disgust from every thing gloomy; and attributing the cold solemnity in the manners of many pious people to the natural influence of the gospel, they have often acquired a powerful and unhappy prejudice against religion itself. And persons of every age naturally regard with dislike whatever tends apparently to overwhelm the mind with melancholy, and so embitter those innocent enjoyments which reason and nature authorize, and

the means of which God has so abundantly provided. If therefore we wish to conciliate the feelings of men towards religion, to make it interesting, and to persuade by our example to the love and practice of it, it is important to prove that it indeed conduces to present happiness, by displaying an unaffected cheerfulness, so far as it can be displayed with innocence, and is consistent with the strict requirements of the gospel. Habitual cheerfulness is the natural result and expression of that love of God, that grateful reception of his blessings, and that pious trust in his providence, which we are ever bound to maintain and to manifest. If we have an unwavering confidence in his protecting care, why should we be anxious and desponding? If we indeed can look up to him with a heartfelt affection, why should we be gloomy? Cheerfulness is a duty, because it conduces to benevolence; it nourishes feelings of kindness towards others and disposes us to rejoice in their happiness, and to make exertions to prevent their sufferings, and promote their good. The gloomy and austere turn from the success and joy of others with disgust and envy. Who knows not what a chill the sadness of one gloomy spirit throws over the joys of others; and how much habitual cheerfulness diffuses peace and gladness over the circle of domestic friendship. Cheerfulness is also important, because a dejected and melancholy spirit unfits us for the regular, consistent, and vigorous discharge of the duties

which God calls us to perform. When we enter upon them without interest, and go through them with dejection and languor, we do not yield that willing, animated, zealous obedience, which best corresponds with the free and generous spirit of the gospel.

Though cheerfulness be thus important in itself and in its connexion with other duties, there is another disposition enjoined in the text which is yet more important, and with which the vigor, steadiness and continued improvement of the christian character is intimately connected. "Stand in awe and sin not." The text exhorts us to maintain habitual seriousness of spirit. This disposition is often confounded with the sternness and gloom which have already been reprobated; but they are entirely dissimilar, and have no connexion with each other. Seriousness of disposition is often supposed to be at variance with that cheerfulness which has been represented as a duty; but it is not so. It is not only perfectly consistent with uniform cheerfulness, but is in fact its surest foundation and best support. Seriousness is opposed to levity, to thoughtlessness, to want of consideration, to a trifling, giddy, dissipated, improvident state of mind. Let experience decide which has the most of true and permanent cheerfulness, the mind that is careless, vain, and trifling, or that which is sedate, calm, and thoughtful. Almost all the dispositions and feelings which spring from a durable cheerfulness, have in them much of a serious character.

The tranquillity of daily happiness is most often interrupted by petty cares, and trifling irritations and disappointments. But an habitual seriousness, by giving steadiness and firmness to the mind, prevents its being ruffled and disturbed by events like these. The calm and solemn interest which the contemplation of the truths of religion inspires, elevates the heart above all trifling vexations; and the mind occupied with nobler objects, will not receive any great or lasting pain from the disappointments of ordinary life. Besides, on the most careless mind, solemn and awful recollections will at times intrude; and it is only an habitual seriousness which enables us to contemplate them without apprehension and dismay. On those subjects which every mind is compelled at times to consider, and which alarm and sadden the careless and the gay, you find the serious converse with composure and often dwell with delight. Your own observation readily teaches you, that if the life of the serious have fewer bursts of tumultuous joy, it has also fewer seasons of disgust with life, and of unquiet apprehension and gloom; that its course is indeed one of more constant peace and habitual cheerfulness.

Without dwelling longer on the perfect consistency between great seriousness and uniform cheerfulness, I wish to consider the importance of the temper enjoined in the text *in reference to the religious character*. "Stand in awe and sin not."

1. Such a disposition, in the first place, is here

represented as *a great security against sin;* and reason and experience confirm the truth of the assertion.

By the phrase "stand in awe," and by the term seriousness, we are to understand a disposition to reflect on the truths and objects of religion, an habitual sense of our own personal interest and deep concern in it; a habit of regarding all events and objects chiefly in a religious point of view. In this sense of the term, seriousness of disposition is a great security against sin, inasmuch as it saves from many temptations. There are many scenes of life, particularly scenes of amusement and pleasure, in which our convictions of our responsibility to God are soon weakened or lost, our sense of the importance of a strict and elevated purity and devotion, our solemn resolutions of amendment, if not our principles and habits, are often attacked, shaken, and impaired; and in which many thoughts and feelings are excited, and a general spirit imparted, which are decidedly contrary to the spirit of the christian system. From these scenes of temptation and danger, a serious disposition will withdraw us. It creates a taste for more elevated enjoyment than they can furnish; it destroys the inclination and fondness for them, renders them dull, uninteresting and fatiguing; and by the manner in which it prompts us to regard them, renders them the means of exciting many impressive and useful reflections, rather than of disturbing the feelings and habits of a

christian life. Many temptations arise from the fascinating influence of the world, its flattering distinctions, the splendor which riches throw around those who possess them, and the excitements of its various pleasures. On a light and giddy disposition the full effect of these worldly influences is felt; they seize upon all its thoughts, continually kindle its desires, fill its imagination with earthly visions, and prevent its affections from being formed into a devotional spirit, and from soaring to a better world than this. But a serious mind implies a state of feeling over which these fascinations have little power; vain wishes are there excited with difficulty and subside without effect; the habit of considering the objects around us in a religious light, soon detects the delusions of fancy and the insufficiency of the brightest promises of earth. We learn to regard them as they really are, capable of giving enjoyment, but an enjoyment which is uncertain in its duration, disturbed by many anxieties, and insufficient to satisfy the heart; as perfectly unable to support us in the trials and sorrows of life; and from which at all events death will soon separate us for ever. When the mind is accustomed to take these just views of life and its objects, the charm of the world has vanished, and many of its temptations have lost their power. Why should we give ourselves up to a world whose promises are vain and uncertain, whose pleasures, our own hearts tell us are insufficient, and which is fast vanishing away?

Shall we hold the interests of religion secondary to the fading interests of this life? How little can we gain—but how much shall we certainly lose! By seeking first the things of earth, we may leave behind us more abundant wealth or a prouder name, or life while it lasts may pass away in hurried amusement, and careless dissipation. But what shall compensate us for the loss of a kingdom in heaven! "Stand in awe, and sin not."

Again. One of the greatest securities against sin is found in the sense of our own danger, and the avoidance of all needless exposure, and the resolute endeavor to repress and overcome the first attacks of temptation. But this is caused by that deep conviction of the importance of the objects of religion, that concern for christian character, and that frequent reflection on his own peculiar frailties and sins, which are found only in a character sincerely and habitually serious. The knowledge of our danger can be acquired only by patient and severe self-examination, and this a giddy mind will not give to the subject; and the reality of any spiritual danger can be rightly felt only by those, who are so sensible of the infinite importance of God's favor, that they regard every thing with fear which threatens to impair, in the slightest degree, the purity of their religious character. It is only some great and glaring temptation which arouses the conscience and arrests the steps of the unthinking; they rush into the ordinary dangers of

a religious life with heedlessness. But great and alarming temptations do not frequently occur; we are made negligent of religion, and plunged into guilt, gradually, by giving way to the smaller temptations, by the want of vigilance, and by not regarding the consequences which the first step may bring. And it is only a mind accustomed to serious meditation, and deeply impressed with its responsibility to God, which is at all times sufficiently awake to discern the silent and concealed approach of ordinary danger, and sufficiently resolute to avoid or resist it at first. A serious disposition, too, gives a firmness of principle, a power of self-command, a capacity of summoning up with force and readiness the solemnity of christian motives, which sustains in the hour of trial, and enables us by the grace of God to resist temptation with success. "Stand, then, in awe and sin not."

2. A serious disposition is not only thus a great security against sin; *it is also the best ground for the implantation and improvement of religious principle and feeling.* Without seriousness indeed religion cannot exist; and the progress of the religious character is very much to be tested by the increasing degree of seriousness which it produces. Unless we are really concerned, and deeply concerned, for our present character and our final salvation, we can vainly pretend that religion has any powerful influence over us. A serious disposition is always desi-

rous of receiving religious impressions, and will employ all the means and opportunities which God grants for acquiring them, with a zealous interest. The good seed, when scattered abroad, finds there a soil fitted for its reception; and religious impressions will therefore be more often given, and given with greater power. It is the want of seriousness, which renders the various means of religion upon many minds so utterly inefficacious. Their importance is not felt by the unreflecting, and they are neglected; or when attended to at all, levity as effectually as sin, hardens the heart against conviction, and prevents any distinct and powerful reception of religious truth.

Religious impressions, in order to be effectual and permanent, must be watched, guarded from injurious influences, nourished by careful contemplation, confirmed by prayer, and rendered practical by deliberately following up the train of reflections to which they give rise. When this is not done, how deep soever they may have been at first, they will soon be swept away. A powerful appeal, or solemn warning may leave on a light and giddy mind some religious impression, may awaken to some reflection, may excite some concern or fear for final safety, and lead to the formation of some good wishes and purposes; but how soon are all forgotten, and how entirely fruitless are they very often in the end! It is only a serious disposition which nourishes them with interest and long continued

care, sufficient to render them effectual to the real improvement of the religious character.

Frequent solitary meditation on the truths and duties of religion, is the nurse of all that is pure, devout, and holy; and without it the character will always be loose and unsettled. It is only by solitary meditation, that those awful motives which revelation discloses can be distinctly realized, and can take that powerful hold on the imagination and feelings which will give them a controlling influence over the conduct. It is then only that we can see the world as it is and ourselves as we are, and that the realities of eternity, now obscured and placed at a seeming distance by the shadows of earth, rise up before us in all their inexpressible importance. It is in these hours of meditation, that the serious spirit, stunned with the noise and wearied with the toils of the world, finds her rest, and repairs her strength, and feels within herself those high and solemn anticipations again awakened, which speak her relation to scenes and to beings now unknown. It is hours like these, which purify and spiritualize the character, which redeem the heart from the meanness and grossness of earthly passion, and prepare us, when the consecrated season is past, to return again to the trials and duties of life, cheered with a better hope, and with affections resting in heaven. Where is the giddy and dissipated who finds in his own life those hallowed seasons of meditation? Does not levity destroy both the inclination to seek, and the capacity to maintain and enjoy them?

Again. By his various dispensations to ourselves or to others, God designs to furnish us lessons of wisdom and means of religious impression and improvement; but all are often in vain to a mind which levity has hardened. It is on a serious disposition, that these, as all other means of religious improvement, are effectual. To a man of this disposition, all around him in nature speaks of its great and ever-present Author. The circumstances of his own situation, incessantly tell him of his dependence and his responsibilities; and the vicissitudes which life is ever producing in himself or displaying in others, lead him to impressive and profitable reflection. Dispensations of affliction are among the most powerful means which providence employs to discipline our characters. But how slight the effect which even these often have on a giddy and careless disposition! It sinks for a while into melancholy and despair; and as time lightens the burthen, solemn considerations depart, and it soon joins itself to the world, light and unthinking as before. This is not indeed always the case. There are those who once had all the levity which the unchastened, unrestrained flow of youthful spirits could give, and when God bowed them to the dust in sorrow, have found that it was indeed good for them to be afflicted. But we are to be instructed by the divine appointments to others as well as to ourselves, and it is generally a serious disposition alone which in this case is permanently benefited. From the

abodes of poverty, from the bed of pain and disease, from the house of bereavement and death, the gay and unthinking turn with weariness and disgust; but the heart of the serious man is softened and made better. They help to establish his views of the precariousness of every thing earthly; they impress him with the salutary conviction of his own exposure to suffering; they bring up before him those final scenes which nature contemplates with awe, but which himself soon must pass through; and thus urge on him, with greater force, the importance of a preparation for that better world where the changes of sorrow are unknown. Such a man understands how it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.

3. *On the discharge of the active duties of a religious life*, a serious disposition has a very important influence. Levity debilitates the mind, deprives it of firmness and hardiness of purpose and principle, benumbs the conscience, and relaxes the powers of moral exertion. It leaves no vigor, resolution or perseverance. The duties of life are often difficult, and require much of energy and determined patience to be discharged aright. Religion requires much self-denial, it calls us to make many sacrifices. But for all these, a trifling disposition is altogether unprepared. It shrinks, enervated and complaining, from the conflict of faith, and the high career of difficult and trying duty. We need much sober thought on the sub-

ject of our duties; or we shall not understand them aright, or discern distinctly in what manner christian principles are to be applied to particular circumstances. One of the most common errors is found in too low an estimation of the strictness and extent of the requisitions of the gospel. The thoughtless imagine that they can comply with all its demands without vigilance, without self-denial, without exertion, and by a life, defiled indeed with no gross crime, but spent at random, vain, useless, unregulated by any distinct reference to christian rules;—forgetting that "straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that walk therein." But the serious and thoughtful mind, accustomed to consider this life as it is—a transient state of trial, and often to contemplate the world to which it is going, and to realize its unearthly nature and its infinite importance, will feel how reasonable and how necessary are those requirements of the gospel, which call so imperatively to lives of the strictest purity, and the most exalted, uniform, and practical piety.

A dissipated, trifling disposition has a destructive influence on some of the best habits and affections of the christian character. Prayer, for example, is the greatest means of religious improvement, and a duty most solemnly enjoined. But where the heart is not habitually serious, this duty is altogether neglected, or else performed in a hurried, formal manner, with a distracted

mind, and a cold and weary heart.—What effect has habitual levity on the purity of the heart?—Where the thoughts are permitted to rove idle and unchecked, and the imagination is thronged with a continual succession of fantastic visions will the heart never be polluted? Would not a serious conscience turn with shame and remorse from those fancied scenes, on which the vain and dissipated mind often dwells with passionate delight?—A giddy disposition will always be deficient in the deep feelings, and practical habits of benevolence. It cannot sympathize strongly, it avoids the contemplation of actual distress, and is incapable of that self-denial, and resolution, and labor in circumstances of suffering, which the practical charity of the gospel, in many cases renders necessary. The best affections of piety, too,—the love of God, gratitude, firm and cheerful trust in his providence, controlling desires of his approbation, cannot be strongly excited and permanently maintained without habitual and serious attention to his agency around us, and to his revelations of himself. This is essential to keeping alive interesting and impressive views of the character and government of God, of our own intimate connexion with him, our entire dependence, and our numberless obligations. So that without habitual seriousness, many of the active duties of life will be neglected, or discharged with unfaithfulness, and the character will be deficient in the best and most important christian graces.

I have endeavored to illustrate the importance of a serious disposition by pointing out its effects. There are more direct reasons, which your own minds must realize, which most solemnly declare its necessity. You believe yourself now, and every instant of your life, in the immediate presence of the most high God; that his eye is upon you in every scene of life; that he witnesses every vain imagination which arises in your mind, every idle word which bursts from your lips, every deed of folly and of guilt. In his presence, will you not stand in awe? You think of yourself now as in a state of trial; you acknowledge your everlasting welfare to be entirely dependent on your present conduct; and you know that when a few rapid days are past, you will appear before God in judgment. Will you not then stand in awe, when every hour is adding to your account, and helping to fix your fate for ever?

It was my intention to have dwelt on some of the obstacles which prevent the acquisition of a serious temper, and some of the means to be employed for its maintenance. But I can only remark in passing, that the acquisition and maintenance of a serious spirit is utterly irreconcileable with a dissipated life, with a constant pursuit of amusement, with a continual intercourse with company, or with an incessant devotion to worldly business. The means of acquiring a serious disposition are found in being much alone; in habits of reflection on the uncertainties of life, and the realities of eternity; in applying to ourselves

those warning dispensations which providence appoints to others; in the daily habit of reading those scriptures of God, and those works of men, which point out our duties, and tell us of hereafter; and in frequent conversation on those subjects, which embrace all that is important to us as immortal beings. But the greatest means of nourishing a serious spirit, is found in frequent retirement and religious meditation. Go, then, often to your closet. Shut out from your mind the cares and the follies which occupy your busy hours, and commune with your own heart. When solitude has calmed your hurried spirit, ask yourself, Why was I brought into the world, and for what end am I living? Is this life the whole of my existence, and will all be terminated to me for ever when I sleep in the dust? If not, whither am I tending? and what will become of me? What is that future existence of which my own heart speaks so awfully within me, and which the word of God so solemnly reveals? What must I do? What must I become, in order that *that* world may be to me one of joy? How does my life *now* correspond with what God requires? How long shall I certainly live, that my character may be amended, and that heaven may be sure? Is it possible that I may lose heaven by my negligence? Shall I live then at random? Is death rapidly approaching me, and is the time of my departure uncertain? What will be my condition, if all my opportunities, and all the privileges which God in mercy has bestowed, should fail at last of making me wise unto salvation?

SERMON II.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

MARK XII. 30.

THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH. THIS IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

You have doubtless often remarked the singular fulness and strength of expression in this command of our Saviour. The variety of phrases employed not only renders the command itself more forcible, but also guards against misapprehensions of the nature of the affection it enjoins. While by the phrase, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul," lively, strong and permanent feelings are demanded; the next phrase "with all thy mind," or intellect, teaches that this love is to be rational, well-regulated, and such, in its causes and influences, as the soundest understanding may approve; and when it is added "with all thy strength," we are told that it is to be practical, to influence our ordinary conduct, to direct our exertions and employ our strength in works of obedience and duty.

"This is the first commandment." It is so, because a devout regard to the Deity is the very foundation of all religion; because our obligations to the love of God are more numerous and more imperative, than to any other disposition or duty; and because this command is more comprehensive in its nature, more important and universal in its influence, and more beneficial in its effects, than any other can be.

As a rule of conduct, the love of God will enter into every action, extend to feelings and to circumstances which laws cannot reach, and easily decide in cases too minute or too complicated for any general directions to solve. It furnishes, too, a motive, which waits not for deliberation or reasoning to call it into action, which influences where all other motives would be vain, which metes not its obedience in stinted and narrow measure, but is prodigal in service to God. In a word, for the want of this, nothing can compensate; without it, obedience is wavering, languid and joyless; while itself may supply the place of all other moral excitements and rules. It is not wonderful, then, that Jesus should enjoin, as the first command of his religion, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

Little observation is needed to convince us, that many misapprehensions prevail as to the nature and origin of the disposition enjoined in the text. There are many, who, from want of culture, from peculiar dispositions, or habits of mind, are accustomed to consider all religious

subjects as enveloped in a strange mysteriousness. The love of God, by such persons, is considered as something inexplicable and incomprehensible, unlike all other affections, entirely beyond our power to acquire, and only to be communicated to the heart by miraculous interference. It sometimes happens that those of cooler minds confound, on this subject, the cause and the effect, and consider the love of God, not as an affection of the heart, but as a particular course of external conduct, which is properly the result and expression of that affection. They view it as simply a regular discharge of outward duties, without any strict regard to the feelings and principles from which they should spring. On the other hand, a fervid excitement of animal feelings, unaccountable zeal, the tumult of wild and agitated passions, or a groundless and daring confidence, is made to take place of that humble and rational affection, whose sincerity is tested only by the fruits of a pure and holy life. In this discourse I shall hope to correct these views by endeavoring to illustrate the nature and sources of the love of God.

I remark, first, that there is nothing mysterious or inexplicable in that love of God enjoined by our text. It is no unaccountable impulse communicated without our knowledge, and enkindled only by miraculous operation. It is no passionate excitement and ecstasy of feeling, awakened we know not how, supported by no reasons, governed by no rule, unattainable by our exertions, and

uncertain in its effects. It is a disposition which all can understand, and which all can acquire, and maintain. It is nothing surpassing our nature, or opposed to it. It is no new affection superadded to our hearts, but only a new and holier direction of affections which already exist there. The love of God is an affection equally intelligible in its nature, equally capable of being distinctly traced to rational and consistent causes, equally attainable by our exertions, and equally plain and certain in its effects, as the love of man.

God has warmed and ennobled our hearts with certain affections which distinctly correspond to, and tend towards, their peculiar objects. He has implanted in us original feelings of reverence, of gratitude, of esteem, of love. Whenever an object corresponding to these affections, and suited, by its nature, to excite them, is presented with distinctness and force to the mind, these feelings are awakened. Their moral character is determined simply by the object to which they are directed. When they are directed towards human beings, they are benevolent affections, and constitute the love of man; and when they are directed to the Creator and Father of all, and rest supremely on him, they then constitute that love of God, which our Saviour so powerfully enjoins.

In this view, the love of God perfectly corresponds, in its nature, with the love of man. It is composed of the same affections, it arises from corresponding sources, and will be characterised

by corresponding effects. The difference between the two dispositions arises only from the infinite disparity between their objects; the immeasurable distance between the awful majesty and immaculate perfections of God, and the frailty and sin which defile the most venerable and amiable of those who bear his image on earth. In this view there is nothing mysterious, irrational, or unaccountable in the love of God. It arises simply from our being habitually impressed with those views of the character and agency of God, which are suited to call forth the sentiments of reverence, gratitude, esteem, and affection.

Consider then the character of God, without any immediate relation to ourselves; and even here you will see the reasonableness and obligation of the command to render him your love. Consider his power, so universal and uncontrolable; his knowledge, which marks even the falling sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our heads; his wisdom, so wonderful in working, so exhaustless in resources. Attend to the manifestations of these perfections, inscribed alike on the dust of the earth, and written in characters of glory by the stars of heaven. Remember it was his voice, which called this universe of wonders from nothing; his hand, which now sustains this earth amidst the void; his influence, which first kindled the flames of the sun, and daily sends him forth on his race of glory, rejoicing in his strength. Contemplate the immensity of God's universe, and the myriads of known and unknown beings

which people it with life; and then try to realize, that should his agency for a moment be suspended, all would vanish, and amidst the awful solitude God would alone remain. Do you not see here traces of perfection, which should fill you with reverence and awe?

But think not of God merely as venerable in power and wisdom. Conceive, if you can, that everlasting faithfulness, on which the hopes of a dependent creation rest; that holiness, so spotless, that the heavens are impure before him; and that goodness, vast as his universe, and endless as eternity. This is the character which calls for your love; and what heart should not render it, which can discern and feel the excellency of moral perfection? Men do not think of God with reverence and affection, because their views of his character are so unsettled, indefinite, and unworthy. Their conceptions of God are taken up at random, are received by accident, or formed in carelessness. They heed not the voices resounding through creation, which proclaim the majesty and mercy of its author. They are not accustomed to that solitary contemplation, which alone can realize subjects of a spiritual and unearthly nature; nor to that silent and hallowed meditation on his character, which alone can correct their false views, can purify and elevate their conceptions, and cause them to see God as he is. And in proportion as we "acquaint ourselves with God," in proportion as our views of his character lose their confusedness and become

more definite, consistent, and worthy, we shall look to him with sentiments of deeper reverence, and more confiding and fervent love.

The love of God, however, arises less from abstract contemplations on his character, than from viewing him in relation to other beings, and to ourselves. "We love him," said an apostle, "because he first loved us." We should love him, too, for his goodness to our fellow beings. When the exclusive pursuit of our own interest has not chilled the feelings and contracted the heart, we naturally take pleasure in the happiness of others, we sympathize somewhat with their gratitude, and regard their benefactor with esteem and affection. Who loves not the man who is steadily employing his powers and resources in lessening the sufferings and promoting the welfare of others, though his kindness reach not us? When we read the history of distant nations and of other times, who thinks not with delight of the philosopher or the patriot whom God raises up to guide, adorn, and bless them, though ourselves reap no benefit from their labors?* Is it unreasonable then, to dwell with reverence and love on that Almighty Parent of all, whose goodness has been from everlasting, and whose tender mercy, from the infancy of creation, has been communicating blessings to all his works?

We are too apt to regard the Deity as a distant, solemn being, unmoved by affections, absorbed in himself, and caring for his creatures

* Cappe's Discourses, p. 110.

only as they carry forward his plans, and witness his glory. With this view the glow of devotion departs; there seems something unamiable and repulsive, and we think of God with at best a distant respect and solemn awe. But we should rather regard him, as the scriptures reveal him to us,—as a benevolent father, surrounded by his universal family, whom he created to make happy; on whom he ever looks with affectionate interest, and in whose improvement and felicity he rejoices. Do you need this view to be illustrated? Look abroad then, on the grandeur and magnificence of his creation, and say, if in its order and harmony, its majestic and unvarying laws, and its beneficent influences, you discern not the marks of a benevolence, which watches for the welfare of his creatures; say, if in all the complicated machinery and numberless contrivances in nature, you can find any one, whose design is to produce only suffering; and if you discern not countless evidences, that God designs and desires the happiness of his children.

Consider how much this benevolent design of God is in fact answered, even in the narrow circle which our eyes can embrace. Observe how much the happiness of even the lowest orders in creation is contrived for, and is promoted. How many myriads of beings, animated, active, and happy in their existence, fill the air, beat the earth, or sport in the wave. Think how endless the variety of wants in each different class; even the food of one will not suit another;

and how constantly returning are the wants of each separate individual. Yet all these are provided for, and all in some way express their happiness. When you go forth in the morning of spring, and look on the various orders of insects and animals, with which God has peopled the air and the earth, do not their wild and sportive motions, their incessant and unneeded activity, and their songs of joy, testify as strongly as language could do, their exultation and delight in the existence with which they are blessed? And is not that Being, who, amidst the immensity of his creation, overlooks not the least of his works, who continually provides for and imparts happiness to the wild beast of the desert, and the insect of the air,—is not that Being worthy of your veneration and your love?

Would you gain loftier views of that goodness which calls for your love, raise your eyes from these lower objects to man and to society. Read the history of our race, and learn with what wisdom and benignity the events of our world have in past times been ordered; behold the Almighty from apparent evil educing real good, steadily carrying on, in every age, the progressive scheme of human improvement, and causing even the gloomiest convulsions of society, and the wrath and crimes of men, to accomplish some purpose of mercy.

Look around you on men as they now are, and where will you find one individual, whose existence on the whole has not been a blessing, and

for whose happiness God has not made some peculiar provision? Consider how many are the capacities of pleasure with which our nature is endued, which are not essential to our existence, but are only bestowed to render life more happy; and think how constantly these capacities are filled with enjoyment. Observe the various delights furnished for the eye and the ear, for the smell and the taste, for the imagination and the intellect. Consider the pleasures of friendship, the comforts of domestic life, the common enjoyments of daily intercourse and mutual good offices, and the security and blessings of civil society. Remember how extensive is all this enjoyment; that the most needed blessings are the most common; and that the same general laws which are dispensing benefits to those we see, are showering them equally on every region, and every tongue. Number, if you can, the myriads of human beings, whose hearts at this moment are swelling with joy or with hope; and then say, if the Being, who is constantly bestowing so great and so various happiness to men, is not to be praised for his goodness, and has not a claim on your love.

Do you need stronger claims? Think then of your own situation, and of that ceaseless mercy which has sustained and blessed you all your past life, and which sustains and blesses you still. Who gave you life at the first, and protected it in those hours of helplessness when no human care alone could have foreseen, nor human ten-

derness alone could have supplied your wants? Who guarded you amid the perils and exposure of youth, saved you in hours of danger, raised you from beds of sickness, and called back your steps from the gates of the grave? Who now supports the life, and blesses you in the friendship, of your nearest connexions? Is it your own power which renders your labors effectual to your prosperity, which causes your fields to ripen with fruit, or returns your ships laden with wealth? Can you depend on yourself for even the most common blessings? Dare you trust your own care to defend the hours of your rest, and keep the slumbers of night from ending in the sleep of death? Will you rely on your own wisdom to guard you from the accidents which threaten you at every step, or the diseases you may drink in with every breath of air? or is it your own precaution which keeps these feeble channels of blood from bursting, or your reason from being overwhelmed with madness and despair? In all this do you not every moment depend upon God? Is he not every moment blessing you? And ought not this to awaken you to gratitude and love?

But is the goodness of the All-Merciful limited to this life? Does it care for nothing but our bodies? Has it made no provision for the welfare of our souls? Will all be over when our eyes are closed on this world? Open the book of his revelation, and it will tell you that here you see but the beginnings of his mercy; it will disclose to you a nobler world where his faithful children

will be for ever blessed. How many means hath he given us of knowing his will and preparing for heaven! With what plainness and affectionate particularity hath he instructed us in his word; how many powerful and touching motives hath he there set before us; what revelations of glory hath he made to animate and console us; and with what mingled solemnity and tenderness hath he warned us from the error of our ways, and entreated us to flee from the wrath to come!

If this condescending goodness of God in thus teaching beings so frail and erring as we, be not sufficient, what think ye of his last and greatest gift? For us God gave his Son to be our instructer, example and guide. For our sakes he gave him to be a persecuted sufferer, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," from his birth in the manger of Bethlehem, till he slept in Joseph's tomb. Is there not here an evidence of God's mercy to us, which no love of ours can equal or repay?

When you have contemplated this various and wonderful goodness of God, then think of yourselves. What are we, that He should thus be mindful of us? and where should we have been, had his benefits to us been measured by our deserts? How faint and wavering are the strongest affections which ever have risen to him! How seldom have our thoughts been with him, dependent, protected, and blessed as we are by him! How many are the commands we have wholly neglected, or imperfectly obeyed, or violated in heedlessness and presumption! How

often might God have cut us off in the midst of our guilt, in the very moment of transgression, and called us from the world in a state most unfit for death! But he has spared us; and with unwearied patience and unabated kindness, continues to save us from misery and to crown us with mercy. Ought not this view of ourselves and of God, not only to render us humble, but to awaken us to grateful and fervent love?

Such are the feelings which unite to form the love of God, and such are the sources from which they spring. And in these views God is as distinct and intelligible an object of the affections, as a human benefactor or an earthly parent can be. I have set before you but hints of the reasons why God is to be loved; perhaps they have been too general to impress or affect you; but it becomes you to remember and to complete them. And when, in your seasons of retirement and contemplation, you endeavor to realize the perfections of the All-Merciful, and to number the ceaseless and boundless blessings which he has conferred; you cannot but feel your obligations to cherish sentiments like those which prompted the sublime devotions of the prophet: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire in comparison with thee. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so longeth my soul, O Lord, for thee. When shall I come and appear before thee? My flesh and heart fail, but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

SERMON III.

RELIGIOUS SINCERITY.

2 CORINTHIANS I. 12.

FOR OUR REJOICING IS THIS, THE TESTIMONY OF OUR CONSCIENCE, THAT IN SIMPLICITY AND GODLY SINCERITY WE HAVE HAD OUR CONVERSATION IN THE WORLD.

THE general import of the term Sincerity, is freedom from disguise, and undissembled openness of character and conduct. The term is capable of various applications; and its moral import is determined by the character of the qualities or the actions to which it is applied. A man may be sincerely vicious, a furious bigot, sincerely hardhearted; and in these cases, to call him sincere, cannot be considered as bestowing very high praise. No one is to be commended for being openly profligate in principle or practice; but is rather to be considered as evincing a greater want of moral feeling, than when he disguises in some degree his real sentiments, and covers his conduct under the veil of decent concealment. Sincerity alone is no substitute for other virtues, nor will it alone save us from criminality and condemnation. The justness and ap-

plication of this remark will be understood by a more particular illustration.

The duty of a Christian is comprehended in a *right belief*, and a *right practice*. In respect to both, sincerity alone, as the term is commonly applied, is clearly insufficient.

With respect to practice, it is not sufficient that we perform what we think to be our duty, however sincerely, unless we have previously endeavored rightly to understand what our duty is. We are evidently responsible to God, for the correctness of our notions of duty, so far as he has given us the means of knowing it, as well as for our obedience to its laws when known. Every one conversant with history will recollect many instances of oppression and violence, committed by men who were wrought up to a persuasion of the rectitude of the acts, and of their own obligation to perform them. If they had the means of knowing their duty better, their sincerity in crime surely did not render them innocent. Among professed believers in Christianity, there have been sects which directly authorized and enjoined the grossest vices. Can you conceive the disciples of these sects justifiable, when in their hands were the rules of the gospel commanding them to purity and godliness? It would not now be difficult for many a man, by inattention to truth, by sophistical reasonings, and the illusions of fancy, to persuade himself that some particular act, although directly at war with the plain commands of the gospel, is yet to him innocent and obliga-

tory. Yet we should swerve greatly from the strictness of christian principle, if we imagine that this persuasion, thus produced, destroys in the least degree the criminality of the act.

The truth is, we must in all cases take into consideration, the means and opportunities enjoyed by the individual, of gaining the knowledge of his duty, and the degree of care and conscientiousness with which he has improved them. We can consider no error of conduct innocent, which does not arise from invincible ignorance; and its guilt is in proportion to the degree in which it might and ought to have been avoided. And whenever from the influence of evil prejudices voluntarily indulged, from obstinacy, pride, or sensual passion, from superficial and careless inquiry, or complete inattention and neglect of the means of religious knowledge, we violate the christian commands, under false notions of duty, sincerity of persuasion can in no degree exonerate from guilt.

We are to apply the same rules of judging to cases of erroneous belief. There have doubtless been persons sincerely persuaded that Christianity is not true. Yet we cannot consider such persons innocent, however sincere, if their infidelity arose from want of careful examination of Christianity itself, and of the evidence on which it claims to be received as divine. It is said that one of the most able and acute of modern unbelievers acknowledged, that he had never read the New Testament with attention. It would be an unauthorized stretch

of candor to think his unbelief justifiable merely because it was sincere; or to consider that his criminality was not rather increased by his wilful disregard of the means of investigating the truth of the christian system. With regard to the views which Christians themselves entertain of the truths of their religion, sincerity of belief is not alone sufficient; the disposition to seek the truth, and the conscientious employment of the means of arriving at it, are essential. The want of this, manifests a want of that principle of faith which 'justifies.' In forming our opinions of christian doctrines we are to examine the scriptures with diligence, and with minds sincerely *desirous* of knowing the truth, and determined to embrace it, however opposed it may be to prevalent prejudices, or favorite opinions. Errors in faith, like errors in practice, are criminal, when like them they arise from unfaithful inquiry, the influence of bad passions, or the wilful neglect of those means and opportunities which God has put in our power, of rightly understanding the truths which his gospel was designed to reveal.

Our text refers exclusively to the religious practice of the Apostle. "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had *our conversation in the world.*" This is the happiest state which a Christian can experience; when his own conscience is at rest with himself, and in peace with God, and he can look upward with an humble assurance of divine favor, and forward with a

hope full of immortality. It is a state which all may covet, but with regard to which it is possible for us to delude ourselves; and it should ever be our prayer to God, that he would save us from self-deception, and groundless security; would enable us to know ourselves as we are, and to indulge no hopes of the future, which are not founded in truth.

In order to this, let us inquire how we may know when we are sincerely religious.

1. In the first place, religious sincerity is not inconsistent with many imperfections. From situation, limited advantages, and bigoted society, there may exist much ignorance, strong prejudices, and narrowness of feeling, in an individual who is most truly desirous to know and obey all the will of God, and who has acquired many of the best graces of the christian character. From the frailty of his nature, there may be some, but not habitual, neglects or violations of duty, which arise from real infirmities, surprise, inadvertence, or the sudden attack of powerful temptation. In a moment of high excitement, such a man may give way to a violent temper, which on all other occasions he resolutely controls. The most patient may sometimes be irritated; the most temperate by importunity and want of caution may be unconsciously betrayed. You cannot doubt the general sincerity of religious character in Job, though, when stung with insupportable pains, he bewailed the hour of his birth; or in Peter, though in sudden danger his impetuosity

led him to a denial, which was immediately effaced by tears of bitterness. In a moment of carelessness, who may not suddenly fail? Nor ought the occasional languor in religious duties, which an infirm body or a fatigued mind produces, to cause those whose piety is habitual, to doubt their own sincerity. Perfection is not requisite to sincerity. All have sinned; and wert thou strict to mark iniquity who could stand? In the beginnings of a christian life, many may be the failures over which the sincerest disciple may have reason to mourn. The influence of religion must always be gradual. The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day—but its morning commences in darkness, and a cloud often may overshadow the brightness of its course. We may be equally sincere in purpose, when our christian character is commencing in weakness and imperfection, as when its habits are matured by time, and more able to withstand temptation.

2. If you would know whether you are sincerely religious, you must examine the prevalent, habitual tenor of your life. Not single acts, but the whole current of our conduct must decide our religious character. What then is the leading object of your life, deliberately proposed, and kept always in view, and to which all else is considered as subordinate? What is the controlling motive, which runs through life, directing and governing all your pursuits? If on serious examination, you find that your habitual disposition

and earnest endeavor is to obey the will of God; if the desire to gain his approbation be your ruling motive; if you covet his favor above all things, and feel that without it nothing can bless you; you surely have no reason to doubt your religious sincerity. Is your own conduct steadily, though perhaps often imperfectly, governed by a reference to the divine will? Amidst all your failures, do you constantly and earnestly endeavor to acquire that exalted character, which the gospel of Christ demands? Is there nothing which causes you more sorrow, than the remembrance of your neglects and transgressions of duty? When you have failed in obedience, are you stung with shame and remorse, and urged instantly to more vigorous exertion? If you can answer such questions satisfactorily, you may without presumption rejoice with the Apostle, that in simplicity and godly sincerity you have your conversation in the world.

In estimating the sincerity of our religious characters, it is well to compare the strength and prevalence of our religious affections, with those which have the world or other men for their objects. If we have a less habitual or less powerful purpose to serve God, than to acquire those worldly objects, whatever they may be, on which our desires are placed, we certainly cannot believe ourselves sincerely and devotedly religious. Of the sincerity of our regard to earthly friends, we do not doubt. And how are we assured of its truth? It is sometimes languid, but never

destroyed. It is immediately roused by opposition, it is ever awake to every thing which would injure them, it urges us to avoid every thing which would offend, and habitually to consult their happiness. And it is thus with the love of God, where it truly exists. It may sometimes appear to slumber, but never entirely ceases. It is easily excited anew in its strength, and pervades the whole conduct with an influence which is habitually felt, however it may, like all other affections, vary at different seasons in its degrees of liveliness.

3. Our religious sincerity is to be tested by the universality of our obedience. No delusion is greater than that of imagining ourselves truly religious, while we live in the habitual indulgence of any one known sin. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." He manifests a want of the first principle of christian character, the honest and determined intention of living up to the full strictness of the christian laws. The spirit of the rule equally comprehends neglects; and there is great reason for self-distrust, so long as we are wilfully negligent of a known and positive duty. What would you think of a child, who, though obedient in those instances which suited his inclination, should habitually, and on all occasions, transgress one of your positive rules, or treat with constant and wilful negligence, any one of your injunctions? You would believe him less sincerely desirous of gaining your approbation, than of

consulting his own pleasure. Thus should you judge of your own sincerity towards God, when you are willing habitually to omit or violate any one of his commands.

Of the christian dispositions there are some which gain little praise from the world. It requires resolution and self-denial to practise the meek, lowly, unaspiring, forgiving spirit of the gospel. Some of its duties will expose you to remark; or they may excite the censure or the ridicule of the companions with whom society connects you. What then is your conduct in respect to these duties? Are you ever ready and determined to discharge them? Does no fear of man's opinion, no corrupt maxim of the world, no force of prevalent example, no custom of society however widely extended, ever destroy your resolutions, lead you to practices contrary to the spirit of the christian rule, or cause you to neglect what conscience assures you is your duty? Are you determined to make every sacrifice of convenience and reputation, of profit and pleasure, which is necessary to the attainment of the purity and sanctity of a perfect Christian? Temptations often assail you. Do not think yourself insincere, because you are attacked; for it is the necessary result of our infirm nature, and our condition of trial. But how have these temptations been resisted? Do they habitually overcome your integrity, or do you rise triumphant from the struggle with them? If, on examining yourself, you are conscious of being resolved to

live to the uttermost a christian life; if you are determined to make every sacrifice and exertion which are demanded; if you religiously intend to make no compromise with sin, to overcome every temptation, and to fail from no requirement of the gospel; then the best assurance of sincerity is yours, and the brightest promise of a reward in heaven.

4. Our religious sincerity is to be tested by our private conduct. It is not impossible that other motives than those of religion may preserve us, when exposed to the eyes of the world, from the neglect or the transgression of christian duties. The light, which shines bright before men, may spring from corruption, and be fed in secret by hypocritical and unclean hands. If we would know our own sincerity, we should consider what we are in those situations, which man cannot know, and where no eye but that of God is upon us. Consider then, whether the power of religion controls and governs you in secret equally as in public; whether the authority of the divine laws, unsupported by the authority of human opinion and human law, is at all times, and in all places, sufficient to restrain you from sin, and to urge you to resolute obedience. Are you as strictly just, when you can violate the rules of justice with advantage and impunity, as though the hand of civil law could reach and punish you? Are you as ready to be charitable, when your kindness and your alms are known only to God, as when you are sure of receiving the applauses

of men? Is the same mildness of temper shewn to your family, and to those who are dependent upon you, as you would fain exhibit in your public intercourse with society? Is there no sin which you practise, no duty which you neglect, in secret? Are you equally cautious of speaking evil of your neighbor, when concealment is sure, as when detection is certain? What are the restraints which you exercise over the secrets of your own bosom—your thoughts, your imaginations, your concealed desires? We can have little claim to religious sincerity, if our obedience to the christian laws be only the garment which we would wear in public, to be laid aside, when the occasion of display is past; if the gospel have not an equal power over us in every situation, and reach not to every scene of concealment, and the inmost motions of our hearts.

5. Another indispensable test of sincerity is religious progress. The rewards of religion are so vast, that we cannot sincerely seek them; the character required is so exalted, that we cannot sincerely determine to attain it; without being anxious for unceasing improvement. And difficulties and obstacles to progress in religious character are so many and so great, that constant advancement demonstrates both the sincerity and the strength of religious principle. We are to judge of our advancement in the christian life, by the growth of a serious devotional spirit, of determination to obedience, and an increased tenderness of conscience. It is true, that from frailty,

or from unfavorable circumstances, intervals may pass away in the life, which are productive of no visible progress; and we must always take long periods into consideration, if we would judge concerning any permanent improvement of character. But when the general course of life rolls on, and adds no effectiveness to the principles, habits, and affections of the christian character; when all have been silently decaying, or we have hardly maintained the degree of sanctity which God's grace once enabled us to acquire—it is time to look about us with anxiety and fear. And if we can then contemplate failure and decay without emotion, without concern, without earnest resolutions and endeavors to amend, we shall have great reason to apprehend that there remains in us very little of religious sincerity. When you would judge of yourself then, consider what progress in religion, what efforts for improvement you have made; and if your own conscience can tell you, that though there may have been intervals of imperfection and neglect, yet you have been gradually increasing in purity of heart and sanctity of life; that your duties are more faithfully discharged, and your temptations more successfully resisted; that your hatred of sin and your desires of christian holiness are increased, and that a more prevalent and influential reference to God's will now rules your life, than ever before;—you have reason to believe yourself sincerely religious, and to hope with humble confidence for the favor of God.

Religious improvement is impossible without the careful use of those means, which inform the conscience with just notions of duty, renew our serious impressions, and nourish the spirit of piety. We ought therefore often to inquire in what manner our religious privileges are improved, and what effects they produce; and we may know much of our present religious state, by considering with what degree of care and seriousness we study the scriptures in which God reveals to us his will; what seasons we devote to that self-examination and meditation, which instruct us in the knowledge of ourselves; and with how much frequency and fervency our prayers are offered to Him, who alone can protect and sanctify and save us.

SERMON IV.

RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT.

1 THESSALONIANS IV. 1.

WE BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, AND EXHORT YOU BY THE LORD JESUS, THAT AS YE HAVE RECEIVED OF US HOW YE OUGHT TO WALK AND TO PLEASE GOD, SO YE WOULD ABOUND MORE AND MORE.

THERE are few topics of general exhortation more often urged by the apostle, than that of diligent and persevering exertion for improvement. And there are few which are more necessary to be urged with frequency. The occupations and amusements of life, the force of prevalent example, and the general excitement of society, unite with the natural propensity to indolence in most men, to prevent deliberate and serious exertion, though they do not entirely destroy the wish, for religious improvement. There is no one who does not feel and acknowledge that he ought to be far more religious than he is; and there are few who do not wish to be better. But unproductive wishes do little good; and they sometimes appease without just cause the secret reproaches of conscience, and produce a delusive and dangerous self-satisfaction. We need, not

merely that good desires should arise in our minds, but that they should be formed into deliberate and serious resolutions, and terminate in vigorous and persevering efforts for amendment. It is to make these efforts that we are called by the exhortation of the text. "We beseech and exhort you, brethren, as ye have learned how ye ought to please God, that ye would abound more and more." We cannot reflect on the nature of a religious life, without feeling that the exhortation is most reasonable and important. For

In the first place, it is impossible to remain stationary in respect to religious character. There are too many causes perpetually operating to change our views, feelings, and habits. Particular temptations are continually presenting themselves, which excite our wishes, inflame our evil propensities, and seduce us to the neglect or the transgression of religious duties; and the general influence of the world tends to render us indifferent, forgetful, and careless. If the motives to a religious life are not so habitually kept before the mind, as to become more distinctly realized, and more powerful in their effect, they are insensibly losing their influence. Those principles which are not acquiring strength by being called into constant operation; those habits of practical goodness which are not confirmed by repeated exercise; those feelings of piety which are not nourished and invigorated with incessant care; are all fast becoming more feeble, inoperative, and cold. So that if we are not making continual

efforts for improvement, the adverse influences of worldly engagements and temptations will cause our christian character to languish and decay. Like a loose and exposed bark on troubled waters, we cannot be at rest; and if we are not by care and labor forcing upward against the stream, we are gradually descending; we are losing what we have acquired of pious dispositions and habits, and our past struggles are rendered vain.

2. A sincerely religious life is always one of constant progress. The perfection of the Christian in this world consists in his always endeavoring to do as much as is possible; in being governed by the habitual purpose of attaining the highest degrees of purity and piety of which human nature is capable. In proportion as this fixed intention does not exist, the genuine spirit of the gospel is wanting; the character is feeble and defective at its foundation. Where the living principle of the gospel has become fixed and rooted, it cannot remain thus inactive. Like a plant it will be rising above the earth, and aspiring nearer to the air of heaven. Its growth may be silent and gradual, and its increase be noted only after long intervals; but it is continually swelling and hardening its trunk, becoming more firm against the storm, more luxuriant in its foliage, and more abundant in its fruits. When that deep and inextinguishable love of moral excellence, that desire of purity and sanctity, which enter so essentially into the christian spirit, are truly awakened, we cannot but be dissatisfied

with the imperfections of our present character, and be excited to resolute and patient exertions for amendment. The first wish of the heart of a sincere disciple is, that the influence of the gospel over his feelings, and principles, and habits of life, should be ever increasing in extent and in power. Where the worth of the christian reward is realized, shall we ever feel that we can make sufficient exertion for its attainment? When the consciousness of our immortal destiny is felt, can we ever make sufficient progress towards it? Can we ever do enough for him that made and continually blesses us, for him that loved and died for us?

There is no point of religious character fixed, which when gained, salvation is for ever secure It is only to those who continue patiently persevering in well doing, and to the end of life are advancing in the christian course, that eternal life is promised. He that puts his hand to the plough and turns back, is unfit for the kingdom of heaven. If the heart has once been deeply impressed with religious truth, and moved by its solemn and touching motives, and becomes again hardened or indifferent,—if we once enter on a religious life with zeal, and that zeal cools, and the fervor of pious feeling expires, and vigilance and exertion sink into neglect and insensibility; it is clear that the influence of the gospel was but superficial and powerless. It will be more difficult to produce anew any powerful religious impressions; to infuse a departed life again into the

decayed system, and to excite an interest and earnestness in religious duty. It were better for us never to have known the way of righteousness, than when we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment.

3. In proportion to the advances we make in religious character, will be the facility of further improvement. The obstacles which hinder our progress will be more easily overcome; the temptations under which once we sunk will be beheld with indifference; religious motives will rise up in our minds more readily and with greater power; our religious principles will acquire more vigor, effectiveness, and habitual influence. Habits of pious practice once fixed, are easily improved. When good impressions have been nourished, the heart becomes more susceptible of them; the moral sense becomes more delicate, and devout feeling more easily enkindled; and the thoughts turn, and the feelings aspire to God and immortality, as to their natural and leading objects. While the aids of the divine spirit, which we are taught to believe of the greatest importance to our sanctification, are bestowed upon us in measures corresponding to our own exertions. To him that hath, it is given, and from the careless and slothful, it is withheld, or is taken away.

Where the mind is resolutely bent on any one object, it is wonderful how every thing is made to contribute to its accomplishment. Circumstances apparently the most adverse are compelled to aid its progress. Observe the course of an ambitious

man; how he rises up under the pressure of obstacles, and how every event, every companion, every change of society, seems to aid his advancement. And it is thus with the progress of the religious character, in those who are determined on its constant improvement. Every thing contributes to strengthen and aid it. If they are happy, a grateful spirit is nourished; if in sorrow, their resignation is improving itself. The ordinary course of daily occupation is furnishing continual opportunities for displaying and invigorating the christian temper. Even temptation contributes to give strength to their religious principles, being conquered by their influence; their very infirmities and failures are not without benefit, as they produce humility and excite to vigilance, care, and exertion. In this way, the greater the progress we have made, the more is our capacity for improvement increased; every thing conspires to aid it;—and subsequent religious advancement is indeed more easy.

Again; the happiness of a religious life is in proportion to our religious progress. Those who are in the habit of watching the workings of their own hearts, and the manifestations of their own characters, are often startled at the discovery of unexpected weakness and deficiency, at the springing up of those seeds of corruption which they hoped were choked for ever, at the bursting forth of those propensities to evil which seemed to be conquered and dead. We are often made conscious, that the real influence of the gospel

upon us is far more weak and wavering than we had fondly imagined, and are compelled to fear, lest, in the hour of trial, our principles may fail, and our devout resolutions be swept away. It is only when the truths of the gospel have sunk so deeply and permanently, as to be constantly increasing in power, and religious habits have been matured into a prevalent character, that we can rest with some degree of confidence in the hope of our own integrity, and go on our way in a spirit of freedom and cheerful hope. As we advance in christian attainment, the self-restraints which once were difficult become easy, and the enjoyments which it once cost us a pang to relinquish, are given up without regret. We learn to act from inclination, rather than constraint; from the love of pious obedience rather than the cold conviction of obligation and duty. The yoke of Christ becomes light, and his ways pleasantness; and in the consciousness of progressive virtue, we find one of the highest of our delights, and most animating of our encouragements. Christian, you have felt in past times, the blessedness which religion gives, when your heart has been lifted to God with childlike and affectionate confidence; when you have found in the consciousness of his favor, a peace which no earthly changes can take away, and have looked beyond this short and troubled existence, with a hope full of immortality. Let this happiness animate you to exertion for incessant improvement; for as you advance, it will be ever increasing, until consummated in the bliss of a happier world.

There are many indeed to whom religion brings little of this peace; and the reason is, that its influence over their lives is so limited and weak. They have no more religion than is sufficient to excite reproach, and embitter their present pleasure, without being powerful enough to excite them to consistent and thorough virtue. They feel what they ought to be, form an occasional resolution, and sink into inaction; and in looking back, can see little in life but habitual failure, neglect, and sin, broken resolutions and ruined hopes. What wonder that the retrospect makes them wretched? If we desire then to share that peace, which religion pours into the heart of the sincere, we must be constant and vigorous in our exertions for improvement.

4. There is another view in which it appears most necessary to make constant efforts for religious improvement. It is the great purpose for which life was given, and is continued. We were brought into being, not to share a transient joy, but to become holy, that we might be meet for immortal happiness. The various dispensations of God's providence towards us, the peculiar circumstances of our condition, the changes of sorrow and of joy through which we pass, the duties to which we are called, and the instructions which we receive,—all are intended to furnish us with the means and excitements to constant improvement of character. So long as life is lengthened out, it is only to give space for repentance, and a season for the acquisition or amendment of the principles and habits of a devoted piety. Shall

we then suffer the great end of life to be unattained? Are we not responsible for all the provisions made for our religious advancement? And what will be our condition at last, when every day and every hour God is in some way warning and teaching us—by the voice of nature within and around us, by the appointments of his providence to ourselves or others, or by the gospel of his Son—if all shall prove vain, and life roll away in neglect and misimprovement? From this world we are rapidly passing away. What preparation have we made for leaving it? Is our work accomplished? Is our salvation secure? Is there no danger of our perishing at last? To what parts of our characters or of our lives can we look as already sufficiently conformed to the most indispensable requisitions of the gospel? Who can realize what Heaven is, and how much must be done to fit us for its attainment, without some secret apprehensions and fears! Are we willing then to rest contented as we are? Is it a time for religious negligence, indifference and delay? Are we not urged by the most solemn of motives, to constant and earnest exertions? What then are the duties we have delayed to perform; the sins with which conscience still reproaches us; the dispositions of piety which we have neglected to acquire? Let us seriously and immediately strive to amend ourselves. It cannot be long before all amendment will be out of our power for ever.

5. We are encouraged, in the last place, to religious improvement, by the consideration that our reward hereafter will be proportioned to our

present progress. On earth we see the distinction made by the course of providence between the neglectful and the diligent. And this distinction terminates not at death. In the kingdom of Heaven are many mansions; and we are taught by the parable of the talents, that among those who at last shall enter the joy of their Lord, some are appointed to a greater, and others to a less reward. This world is a scene of education, and every advance we make in religious culture, qualifies us for nobler offices, and gives the capacity for higher joys. If experience can tell you the blessedness arising from a sense of God's increasing favor towards you on earth, with what unknown rapture will you at last appear before him, if the account you render be that of constant exertion, of talents improved to the uttermost, of a character ever progressive in piety, and a life of which no part has been spent in vain! With what feelings you would leave the world, you may learn from the solemn and pathetic declaration of the venerable apostle. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in the last day, and not to me only, but to all who love his appearing.—Be ye therefore steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor will not be in vain."

SERMON V.

THE PIETY OF OUR SAVIOUR.

LUKE VI. 12.

AND HE WENT OUT INTO A MOUNTAIN TO PRAY, AND CONTINUED ALL NIGHT IN PRAYER TO GOD.

THE peculiar efficacy of teaching by example has always been felt and acknowledged. In order to having just notions of our duty, it is important, not only that principles be laid down for our direction, but that we be shewn how they are to be applied, and be enabled to trace their influence on the character and conduct of others. And when an example is presented in a light which interests, there will be awakened an involuntary feeling of emulation, a desire of resembling the character which we are taught to admire and love.

In this view, the life of our Saviour is a very important part of the moral system of the Gospel. He came to be the example as well as the teacher of men. In order to become so, it was necessary that he should be placed in situations like ours; that, bearing the infirmities of our na-

ture, encompassed by our wants, and exposed to our temptations, he might mark out by his own conduct, the course in which we should walk through trial, and difficulty, and danger. And his condition in the world, separated from his miraculous agency, was indeed like that of a common man, though it was one of extremest exposure and suffering. We may follow him like a brother in frailty, and danger, and trouble, from the manger where his infancy was laid, to the tomb where he slept to be troubled no more. He was tried like us, at one time by hunger and thirst, and then by festivals, and feasts; now he was persecuted by enemies, now was surrounded by affectionate, though bigoted friends; here his ambition was assailed, and there his desire of revenge;—sometimes he was insulted and reviled, sometimes was received with shouts of hosanna, and eagerly followed by multitudes who would raise him to regal power; now the great success which attended him was a temptation to his vanity, and would urge him to relax his diligence and labor; and now the dulness of his disciples, his perverted instructions, and the obstacles which thronged his way, seemed almost sufficient to reduce him to weariness, disgust, and despair. Now these temptations are the same in nature, though not in degree, with those of our common life; like these are the occasions on which we are commonly called to manifest the strength of our regard to God, and the sincerity of our dispositions to serve him. While

our situations of trial so far resemble his, the manner in which our Saviour lived, presents a pattern for our imitation at once perfect and attainable.

This view of the character of our Saviour, as one of common life, as one which we may imitate and resemble, is peculiarly applicable to a disposition of which the text is a signal expression. I mean the Piety of our Saviour; and I hope, that by dwelling on a few of the modes in which his piety expressed itself, we may better know our own duties, and also attain some more distinct and interesting views of his character.

1. The first thing to be noticed in respect to the piety of our Saviour, is the devotional frame of mind in which he seems habitually to have been. This devotional spirit, we see continually manifesting itself. It marked the whole course of his conversations; it was evinced in the feeling manner in which he ever spoke of God; the constancy with which he referred all around him, —the scenes of nature, the conditions of men, the events of providence, the circumstances of his own situation and conduct, to his Father in heaven. In the flowers of the field, he called his disciples to notice the beauty with which God had arrayed it. The passing bird of the air, he points out as an instance of His minute, and tender, and unceasing providence. The motives by which he enforces his instructions are characterized by the same spirit. If he urges his disciples to do good, it is that they might become the

children of the Highest. If he exhorts them to let their light shine before men, it is not that they might honor their teacher, but glorify their Father in heaven. And the very first petitions in the short prayer which he taught them, were, "hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, and thy will be done." The thought of God seemed thus associated with every thing, and every thing was considered in reference to his agency or his approbation.

There is almost no disposition which it is equally important to acquire as this spirit of devotion. It comprehends all other dispositions of piety. And our Saviour's habit of considering the objects around him, in their connexion with Him who created and governs all, is not only the natural expression of a devotional temper, but also the greatest means of acquiring and maintaining it. God is acting all around us, though veils of flesh conceal him from our sight. He is united with all the causes which are operating, though we discern in them only the powers of nature or the agency of man. He is more intimately present with us than any human being can be, though the eye sees him, and the ear hears him not. But there is a language in his works, in which he speaks to the heart which is willing and desirous to know him. As in the works of men, we discern the traces of wisdom and intelligence; as in the benefits we derive from the agency of our fellow-beings, we discover the expressions of their interest and kindness

towards us; so in all the works and operations of God, we may read the notices of his perfections, and the expressions of his benignant mercy, whenever we are willing deliberately to attend to them. And this attention we should give. Our minds should be accustomed to look on the scenes of nature, not merely as objects of taste; not merely as exhibiting an inimitable grandeur and beauty; not merely as furnishing a constant source of refined and innocent delight; but more than all, as indicating that wisdom and benevolence which created and adorn it. We should train our minds habitually to notice the agency of God in all the changes which are continually taking place, in the various influences of the seasons, in the vegetation which blows around us, in the brightness of the morning, and the shadows of night. We should see Him in the silent majesty of the heavens, and feel him in the gentleness of the breeze, as well as when he forces on the mind the conviction of his greatness, in the terrors of the lightning and the whirlwind. The changes of society, the accidents of life, should all be traced to his agency and influence. We should look on all the beings which inhabit his earth, as beings whom he has formed, and animated, and sustained, and the sight of their happiness should guide our thoughts to that universal kindness from which all happiness flows.

The influence of this habitual attention to God's agency would be to produce a spirit of cheerful, affectionate devotion. Our ideas of the

divine perfections would become continually more distinct, noble and elevated. His character would be continually presenting itself in a manner to interest the feelings. His constant presence would be more realized by our hearts, and our own intimate relation and dependence, with all the associated affections it awakens, would be more vividly and permanently felt. By encouraging, and, by deliberate effort, maintaining this habit, the thought of God would become the leading characteristic of our minds, and subordinate to itself all subjects of meaner interest. When silent and alone, our minds would involuntarily rise to Him; and his character, and agency, and relation to us, would become the natural objects of our meditations, when unoccupied by any immediate concerns. It was such a devotional spirit as this, which was the origin of all the expressions of piety in the life of our Saviour. And would we imitate that piety, we must acquire and maintain with much attention and care, that habitual frame of mind which was thus in him.

2. In the second place, the piety of our Saviour was manifested by his referring all his own powers and advantages to the Father, and considering all as derived from him.

He not only continually assures us that he "came not of himself," but that "the Father sent him;" thus attributing, with the Apostle, all the benefits which flowed from his coming into the world, to the mercy of God, who so loved the world that he

gave his Son to save it. He particularly attributes all the parts of the christian system to God. When he speaks of that power of miracles by which he was enabled to prove his mission, he teaches us to look immediately to the Father who gave and continued that power. "The Son can do nothing of himself." "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." If he speaks of the religion of mercy which he had come to dispense, he points us to God as its author. "The words which I speak, I speak not of myself;" "my doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me;" and "as the Father hath taught me, I speak these things." When he refers to his resurrection, he tells us, that it was from the Father that he received the "power to lay down his life, and to take it again." When he directs the minds of his hearers to his future exaltation and his second coming, he assures them that it was "the Father who had given all things into his hand;" that it was "in the glory of the Father," that he should hereafter come; and that it was the Father who had "committed all judgment to the Son." He assumes nothing to himself. Every thing is referred to God as its Author. And his expressions of gratitude for all that he had given him, are continually implied or expressed.

The same feeling of dependence, the same grateful sense of God's goodness, ought we to exercise. All our blessings, like all his, flow from God. We are called indeed to a different service, and different powers are demanded for our work

But as God invested him with all the powers necessary for his undertaking, so he has given to us all the ability which we need to accomplish the work given us to do.

And ought not the capacities and powers which God has given us, though they be not miraculous, to be acknowledged with gratitude? Though our condition be so unlike to his, though we see no visible interpositions of providence on our behalf, though we discern not angels ministering to us when deserted and in trouble, and see not the spirit of grace descending on us as it descended to rest on him; yet are we not entirely dependent on God's care? Is not his providence continually encompassing us, protecting us in danger, supplying our minutest wants, and surrounding us with numberless comforts? Is not God's spirit granted, though it operates silent and unseen, to help our infirmities, to sustain our feeble and failing exertions, and to sanctify our souls, and prepare us for heaven? Why then shall we not imitate the grateful piety of Jesus, and look up from amidst all the blessings and privileges he has conferred upon us, with hearts penetrated and softened with fervent thankfulness?

3. Again. We see the grateful piety of our Saviour expressed on particular occasions when his exertions to accomplish God's will were successful. When he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, he lifted up his eyes in gratitude, "Father! I thank thee that thou hast heard me." When he had succeeded in inculcating the

truths of his religion on the minds of the humble and sincere inquirers around him, he blessed God that though these things were hidden from the wise and learned, they had yet been revealed to babes.

There are continually occurring occasions in our own lives, in which it becomes us to imitate this part of our Saviour's conduct. When any signal opportunities of usefulness or of enjoyment have been given; when any unusual means of improvement have been bestowed; when any danger has been escaped, or any trouble has passed harmlessly by us; when any temptation has been resisted, or any service to God has been done, and conscience is speaking to us in accents of peace;—then let our hearts be touched, then let us remember from whom all good proceeds, and let us acknowledge our obligations with affectionate and joyful gratitude.

4. We see the piety of our Saviour evinced in his seeking the direction and aid of God, when occasions of signal importance occurred. The night before his disciples were chosen, he spent in prayer. They were to be his future and inseparable companions; to them all his instructions were peculiarly to be entrusted; and on their fidelity and zeal in his cause, the success of his religion, so far as connected with human agency, was to be made dependent. And it was natural, therefore, that before he selected them, he should commend the interests of that religion to God. Another, and most affecting instance of

this occurs in the account of what took place just before his crucifixion. To his prophetic eye the scenes of his agony were all developed, and were fast approaching. The multitude was gathering, the mock tribunal was arraying itself, and the cross was prepared. At this hour of awful expectation, we are told that he retired to the garden, and there, in meek submission, commended himself to that God, in whom he trusted, and whose support and favor was all that he sought. Christians, such should be our conduct. In all the conditions of life, amidst all its exposure and uncertainties, we should habitually be looking to God for protection and aid. And particularly when any great change of our condition is about to take place; when any unusual enterprise is to be entered upon; when circumstances of difficulty surround us; when agitated with doubts and anxieties; when looking forward to any scenes of pain and suffering;—we should place ourselves under God's guidance and protection, and implore that gracious assistance which in every time of need, is ready to succor and to save.

5. There is another mode in which the piety of our Saviour was exemplified. When he went up to Jerusalem at the passover, we are told that he found the outer court of the temple filled with money changers, and the sellers of oxen, sheep, and doves. And he made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers;—with the indignant reproof, "Take these things hence—

make not my Father's house, a house of merchandise." We are told by St. Luke that it was his custom to go into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. At the commencement of his ministry, we found him receiving the rite of baptism from John; and it is attended with the declaration, "thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness"—or every injunction of religion.

These instances teach us, that a sound piety will be expressed by a reverent regard to all the external ordinances of God. They show us the importance which Jesus attached to the outward forms, as well as to the internal feelings of religion. And if the example of him, who needed not that man should teach him, carry with it any authority, it lays upon us an obligation to comply with all established institutions of religion; and conveys a tacit and not feeble reproof to all who neglect the public and stated worship of God, from needless engagements, or thoughtless indolence, or trifling inconvenience. There are ritual institutions, too, which are enjoined upon our observance, by commands as explicit and positive as those which enjoin many moral duties. And the example of our Saviour, in his cheerful obedience to the multiplied ritual injunctions of the Jewish religion, surely adds weight to the commands which enjoin upon us a ready compliance with the christian rites;—which call the parent to baptize his offspring into that holy faith which he himself professes, and every disciple of Jesus to gather round that table, which, in its

simple and affecting emblems, commemorates his death.

6. The piety of our Saviour was manifested by his frequent retirement. We often read of his dismissing the multitude which thronged about his steps, that he might go apart to a mountain, and in its silence and solitude, hold communion with God. And there is no means of religion which will have a greater and happier influence on our own characters than this. The general influence of the world, unless it be most vigilantly guarded against,—its hurry and care, its excitements and gaieties—is destructive to all deep and lively feelings of devotion. It is absolutely necessary, if we would acquire and preserve any fervent spirit of piety, to withdraw ourselves often from the world, to turn our thoughts entirely from its scenes and its interests, and to employ our imagination in devout contemplation, and our lips in humble prayer. And we cannot habitually do this, without gaining more solemn and affecting conceptions of our immediate relation to God, of our countless obligations, and of the importance of his favor; without feeling our views elevated, and our hearts softened and hallowed.

7. But it is important further to remark that the piety of our Saviour was not that of retirement alone. It was not that ecstatic and visionary feeling which is generated only in solitude, and which retreats from plain and active duty. It was a practical principle. Jesus retired to solitude—not in the day, the season of labor—but

in the night, when toil was ended, and others sought only repose. We do not find him relinquishing opportunities of active usefulness. We do not find him turning away from the sick whom he might heal, or the ignorant whom he might instruct, that he might devote himself to contemplation. It was only when he had cured their diseases, and dispensed to them his instructions, that he withdrew to seek that consolation and strength from God, which might renew his exhausted spirit, and fit him again for his laborious work.

Like this should be our piety. Religion calls us often to our closets to meditate and to pray. But when this is done, it sends us forth again to the trials and labors of life. It tells us that all feelings are useless and insincere, which do not terminate in active obedience and practical duty. Meditation, and prayers, and feelings are but means; and they are all in vain if they do not originate and accompany a sober, righteous, and godly life.—It was the meat and drink of Jesus, the single object kept constantly in view, to do the will of his Father, and accomplish by his labors the work allotted him. Like him, we have a work given us to do. And this embraces not only the regulation of our own hearts, not only the acquisition of devotional affections, which is to be accomplished by secret and silent efforts;—but also the regular and exemplary discharge of common daily duties. Our respective stations in society are to be properly filled, and the labors of our ordinary calling to be diligently discharged. Our

prudent foresight for the things of this life is demanded. We are connected in families for whose instruction and welfare we are to provide. Friends have a claim on our attention and exertions;—occasions are continually furnished for acts of benevolence and usefulness; and we are called to give our proportion of thought and labor to the general concerns of the community, the protection of its interests, and the promotion of its improvement. Now by our being placed in a state where all this is necessarily demanded of us, as well as by the frequent declarations of God's word, we are taught that these services are an important part of the work given us to do. When we are endeavoring rightly to discharge them, we are accomplishing God's will. As our Saviour devoted himself with earnest diligence to accomplish his mighty undertaking, and manifested his piety by his constant activity; so also should we devote all our powers to filling with faithfulness that comparatively narrow measure of duty which God hath assigned to us. So should we evince the sincerity and strength of our piety by the cheerfulness, and zeal, and industry, with which we strive to discharge all our practical duties.

8. In the last place, I would briefly remark, that the piety of our Saviour was most signally evinced in his sufferings. You cannot but remember the meekness with which he bore the insults of men, the patience with which he endured the severest pains, the unrepining submission with which he passed through agony and death, be-

cause he considered all as the appointment of God, and as subservient to the final accomplishment of his designs of mercy. To us all there are sufferings appointed, though they may be trifling when compared with his. There are disappointments which will cross our fondest schemes; there are pains and sickness to be endured, and friends to be taken away; and there is an hour of agony to be once passed through, under which nature herself shall fail. We should now prepare for these trials, by acquiring a spirit of piety; by forming our hearts to the love of God; and by maintaining a humble and affectionate trust in his wisdom and paternal goodness. It was such a temper as this which sustained our Saviour in the hours of his agony, and it is only such a spirit which can sustain us, when diseased, forsaken, or dying. And it will not merely sustain us in this world; for it is this disposition of piety, with the practical habits that arise from it, which will make us meet for a world which suffering and death never enter.

SERMON VI.

THE SAVIOUR TRIED AS WE ARE.

HEBREWS IV. 15.

WE HAVE NOT AN HIGH PRIEST, WHO CANNOT BE TOUCHED WITH THE FEELING OF OUR INFIRMITIES, BUT WAS TEMPTED IN ALL POINTS LIKE AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN.

However inconsistent the opinions of Christians may be as to the abstract nature of our Saviour, and as to the certainty or the mode of his existence before he was known to men; all agree in believing, that when he entered this world, and dwelt amongst us, he was made in the likeness of man, and was partaker of human infirmities.—The text expresses a very interesting view of his character, arising from the consideration, that he once bore our nature, with all its sinless weaknesses, and all the exposures of our condition. He "was tempted in all points like as we are;" and, exalted as he now is at God's right hand, the sympathies of that nature are not lost. He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" and were it only by the remembrance of what he endured, can now regard with compassionate ten-

derness, the sorrows and struggles of those, who strive to follow him on earth.

"He was tempted, or tried—in all points."

1. In the first place, there were trials arising from his bodily state. We enter the world, clothed with a tabernacle of clay, frail, easily exhausted, and liable to pain. This body, with all its weaknesses and necessities, our Saviour assumed. And the situations in which he was placed, exposed him to all those comparatively lighter sufferings, which, from the infirmities of bodily structure, arise to us. He was born in a condition of meanness. He passed through the helplessness of infancy. He spent the earliest years of his life in the labors of a common occupation, subjected to all the inconveniences to which the greater portion of mankind are exposed. The ministry on which at last he entered, was of unceasing activity, fatigue, and toil. The whole countries of Judea and Galilee were the scene of his labor. We read of him as journeying on foot to their cities; while the multitudes which thronged around his steps, the miracles to be wrought, the instructions to be dispensed, and all the various opportunities for advancing his great work, to be seized and improved, demanded incessant activity and severe bodily exertion.—We see him, like a child of man, at times suffering with hunger and thirst, often exhausted with fatigue, fainting under long continued labors, and distressed with acute pains. At one time, he was so worn with exertion, as to sleep in the fishing-boat of

his disciples, amidst all the tossings and uproar of a storm; and when he passed from the hall of Pilate to the mount of crucifixion, he sunk, entirely exhausted, under the burden of his cross. He, who could scatter the sufferings of others by a word; who could supply the needs, and recall the failing strength of thousands, by a single exertion of his power; wrought no miracle for the relief of his own wants, or the mitigation of his own pains.

We thus see our Saviour partaking with us, in all the weaknesses and evils of our bodily structure, and in the inconveniences and hardships of our commonest life. And though in this, there be less of grandeur, than in other parts of his character, and other situations of his life; yet it may teach us, by his example, in what manner these evils are to be borne; it may serve to bring him nearer to our conceptions and feelings, to produce a more unrestrained confidence towards him; and to cause us to realize the completeness and extent in which he may be touched with the feeling of our infirmity.

2. The worldly condition in which Jesus spent his life, was that of poverty. When he was carried in infancy to Jerusalem, his parents were unable to make the customary offering to the temple; and could only present two young doves, the offering which the law permitted only to the poorest of the people. When he entered into life, his companions were poor fishermen. When the tribute money was demanded of him, trifling

as it was, he procured it only by a miracle; and during all his ministry, though at times his followers ministered to him of their substance, yet often he was destitute. The fowls of the air had their places of repose; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head.

We see, perhaps some of us can feel, the difficulties which poverty opposes to virtue and piety. Besides being attended with many grosser temptations, its general influence on the character, when no resolute efforts are made to prevent it, is very unhappy. The unceasing anxiety it awakens, and the constant attention to one's own interest, which it renders necessary, are apt to contract the heart, and produce sordid views, and a selfish spirit. The sight of ease and abundance which others enjoy, and which we cannot share, is an excitement to envy and jealousy. When continually harassed and perplexed by the difficulties, worn by the hardships, grieved at the frequent disappointments, dejected by the many mortifications, and saddened by the dark prospects which poverty brings; how hard is it to avoid sinking into impatience and murmuring, distrust of God's goodness, and gloomy and irritable disgust with every thing in life. How difficult is it to cherish that spirit of cheerful piety, of warm and grateful devotion, and of ready and unreluctant kindness, which are so important parts of the religious character. Christian, if God hath placed you in poverty, do not sit down in despondency and gloom. Consider the difficulties of your

state, simply as the means which Providence has appointed for trying your sincerity, and disciplining your character. Be comforted amidst all your trials and distresses, by the remembrance that he, who is now our exalted mediator with God, was once like you, a man of poverty and sorrow; and that he learned, by the severity of his own experience on earth, the feeling of your infirmities—how painful is the struggle to which you are called, and how heavy are the burdens which you bear.

3. But although a state of continued poverty brings painful and severe trials, yet the sincerity and vigor of human obedience are most tested by sudden changes, and great reverses of condition. Every situation has its peculiar trials; and our Saviour was to experience the difficulties of all, that to men in every condition of life, he might leave an example for guidance and imitation. His ministry exposed him to all the trials, which sudden reverses could bring. We may follow him from the solitary desert, where he was oppressed with hunger and want, to the dwellings of the rulers, and the festivals of the rich. We see him sometimes followed by a delighted multitude, with shouts and hosannas, and sometimes beset by an enraged populace, furious for his death. Now he was urged to assume the title and authority of their expected king, and now was ridiculed, and scorned, and mocked. At one time he conversed with patriarchs and prophets, and then descended to the dulness and prejudices of

his bigoted disciples. At one time he was surrounded by the splendors of the heavenly world, and declared his beloved Son by a voice from God; yet he died at last, to the eye of the world, a despised outcast, forsaken of God. In the short season of his ministry, our Saviour seems thus to have been exposed to some of the trials attending on every situation. It is most interesting to remark the uniformity of character, which in every change was exhibited; to trace in all the same humility, meekness, and piety; and to remember, that whatever be the trials of our worldly condition, he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and knows how to minister to us, when tempted, the succor which we need.

4. There are many circumstances in the life of Jesus, in which his character was displayed in a manner to reach the heart with peculiar force. What parent can read without emotion, of that touching tenderness, with which the Son of God took little children in his arms, and blessed them? The last conversation of our Saviour with his disciples, filled as it is with expressions of the tenderest affection, seems to throw a new sacredness over human friendship. And if we will follow the steps of Jesus, and mark the compassion which touched him at the sight of the widowed mother of Nain; or if we will gather with the mourners of Bethany, around the tomb of his beloved Lazarus; we shall learn how intimately he can sympathize with the most profound of our sorrows, and with what tender inte-

rest he can behold us, when mourning over the ruins of death, and the desolation of bereavement.

It was this sensibility, this warmth of affection, this union of strength and tenderness of feeling, which not these instances only, but the whole history of his life, leads us to ascribe to Jesus, which rendered much of his common and daily intercourse with those around him a trial, and which added severity to the wrong and injuries he received. Had Jesus no cause of suffering in the dulness of his disciples, their narrow and bigoted prejudices, their selfish and impatient ambition, so contrary to the lowliness he exhibited, and their jealous and violent spirit, so opposite to the religion which he taught? Yet these were his inseparable companions. In their society, he found all the comforts, which this world alone bestowed. How poor, then, was all the comfort he found! Is the ingratitude of friends a trial? What then did Jesus endure, when, in an hour of agony, his best loved friends could not watch with him even for an hour! What was the severity of his trial, when one disciple betrayed him, for a trifling recompense, to the hatred of his enemies and the tortures of crucifixion; when another denied him with curses; when all fled from him as from a criminal; and only a solitary individual followed him to the cross, to watch over the last agonies of nature! Christian, if you are ever tried by the impatience or perverseness of those, whom nature or past affection has made

near to you; remember that even Jesus was not exempt from this; and that he learned to compassionate your sorrows, when he felt all the bitterness of ingratitude from those whom he loved on earth.

But the trials to which our Saviour was subject by the ingratitude of others, were not limited to what he endured from his disciples. Why had he entered the world in the form of a servant, and devoted his life to labor, and want, and sorrow, but for the sake of men, that he might enlighten, and reclaim, and bless them? And it was these beings, whom he came to sanctify and save, who covered him with insult and contumely, and brought him to the tortures of his most miserable death. It was the people, who had witnessed all the purity of his life, whose sick he had cured, and whose sorrows he had comforted, who at last were his bitterest enemies. It was the city over whose approaching desolation he had wept in sorrow, which was the glad scene of his suffering. It was the multitude who had just witnessed his miracles of mercy, and followed him with shouts of joy, who now gathered around his cross with brutal triumph, and imprecated curses on themselves, that they might inflict pains and death on him.

It was this sensibility and tenderness of feeling, which rendered the injurious treatment he daily received from the Jews, doubly painful and revolting. The evils we suffer, are to be estimated, not merely by the extent of the injury

which is inflicted, but more by the character and feelings of the mind which must bear them. Who that has any sensibility, is not conscious how painful it is to be the object of jealousy, suspicion, and hatred? Yet such was our Saviour throughout his life. He was continually surrounded by enemies, who were scanning his expressions, perverting his instructions, misrepresenting his actions, endeavoring to awaken the prejudices or inflame the passions of the multitude against him; and watching for occasions on which they might accuse him to the civil power, and put him to death. At one time, they would terrify him by threats; at another, would ensnare him by the show of kindness, and by artful questions. There was no mode in which a feeling mind could be pained, to which he was not incessantly exposed. His actions and words were continually perverted. If he sought to reform the publicans and sinners, and preached his gospel to the despised and poor, then he was the friend of the profligate. If he entered the dwellings of the rich, then he was gluttonous and a wine-bibber. He could not accept the grateful tears of the woman whom he had healed, without being reproached; nor with humble devotion call God his Father, without being threatened with death for his impiety. If he wrought miracles, it excited their malice; if he refused to work them because of their unbelief, then the Pharisees would deny his claims, or the Nazarenes seek to stone him. He forgave the sins of a poor paralytic, and then he was called a blas-

phemer; he healed the pained and diseased on the Sabbath day, and then he was to be put to death. He cast out demons, and it was attributed to the connivance of evil spirits, and the power of Satan. No gentleness could conciliate, no benevolence soften, no meekness sooth, no sincerity or prudence save him from misrepresentation, malice, and reproach. How painful and discouraging was thus the whole scene of his ministry! What firm confidence in God, what zealous and devoted kindness to men, what self-oblivion and humility were every moment required, to bear up under all these trials! How often might he have been tempted to turn in disgust from those whom he came to save, and to relinquish in weariness and despair the work he had undertaken to accomplish!—Christians, if you have ever known what it is, to be persecuted with rude calumny and unrelenting hatred, to be reproached when sincere and condemned when innocent; if, in what you deem the cause of truth and of God, you have been suspected and reviled; if in humble and anxious earnestness, you have endeavored to rise above the low follies and applauded sins of a vanishing and guilty world, and to attain the strict purity, and lofty zeal, and devoted piety of the gospel; and have been repaid by the world with scorn and ridicule; then may you know something of the severity of the trial, which Jesus continually endured; and you may feel too the worth of that consolation which flows from the assurance, that he is touched with the sense of your infirmities, and

regards with compassionate sympathy your grieved and wounded feelings.

5. Again. To a pure mind no trial is so hard to bear, as that of shame and ignominy. Under this, the stoutest heart often sinks, and the firmest fortitude wavers. To pass over the scorn and insult which he experienced during the active exercise of his ministry, there is hardly any species of ignominy, which our Lord was not called to endure in the last hours of life. Pure and spotless as he was, he was apprehended like the vilest of criminals; was hurried as in mockery from one tribunal to another; guiltless and almost unaccused, was condemned to the most shameful of deaths; and to complete his degradation, a wretched murderer was preferred before him. You need not that I should dwell on the sad scene of his sufferings, or attempt to set before you the beloved Son of God, in the foul hands of those who slew him—his prophetic spirit derided, his claims mocked, crowned with thorns, blindfolded, beaten, given up to the jests and insults of a brutal soldiery, and ridiculed even in the last agonies of the cross. Such were the steps of shame and sorrow by which Jesus descended to the tomb. Such were the sufferings which he willingly bore, that he might be made intimate with all the woes of man, that he might acquire all the sympathies of our nature, and become the compassionate intercessor for our race.

My friends, with what infinite mercy are the revelations of Christianity adapted to the wants

and sorrows of the heart! If in our pilgrimage to a better world, we are beset with difficulties and trials, can we sink in despondence, or think ourselves forsaken, when we remember, that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are? If God visits us with suffering, and calls us to serve him in sorrow and distress, shall we think it hard and repine, when his beloved Son was perfected by suffering? To him we are to look, as, under God, our protector and comforter, through whom all spiritual assistance flows, and to whom the judgment of our race is committed. We can understand and realize the compassion with which he regards us, when we remember that he knows, by what he himself endured, all that is weak in our nature, and all that is difficult and sorrowful in our condition. We can feel that he knows, where the burden lies heaviest upon us, and what support we require; and surely we cannot doubt his readiness to minister to us all the mercy which we need, when we think how much he has endured, that we might be assisted, and sanctified, and blessed.

Let the remembrance then, that we have in the heavens a high priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, comfort us when desponding, and animate us when wearied and sinking; and may we so cheerfully and faithfully press onward, through the discouragements and difficulties of this world of trial, as at last to be received to that better world, where the warfare with sin is for ever ended, and anxiety and sorrow are turned to fulness of joy.

SERMON VII.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

LUKE XXIV. 50, 51.

AND HE LED THEM OUT AS FAR AS BETHANY, AND HE LIFTED UP HIS HANDS AND BLESSED THEM. AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT WHILE HE BLESSED THEM, HE WAS PARTED FROM THEM AND CARRIED UP INTO HEAVEN.

We are told that our Saviour, after he rose from the dead, remained forty days upon earth, assuring his disciples, by sensible and infallible proofs, of the reality of his resurrection; enlightening their minds, and confirming their faith by more just views of those prophetic scriptures of which his mission, character, and suffering were the objects; instructing them more distinctly in the nature and requisitions of the religion which they were to promulgate; and animating their courage and hope by the promise of protection and aid to the end of the world. Our text relates, with the accustomed simplicity of the evangelical historians, the last event of his ministry. Bethany was the scene of many interesting events in the life of Jesus. It was here that he raised

Lazarus from the dead; its mountains had often in the days of his humiliation witnessed his solitary prayers; and near it was the garden of Gethsemane, where he suffered and was betrayed. To this place he now, for the last time, led his disciples; and as he lifted up his hands and blessed them, he was parted from them, a cloud received him, and he was carried up into heaven.

There are many, perhaps very obvious reflections, suggested by the ascension of Christ, some of which I shall now endeavor to offer.

1. The first reflection which this simple narrative suggests, is, the perfect and beautiful consistency between the manner in which our Saviour left the world, and the peculiar spirit of his religion. The same correspondence, indeed, is found in all the other leading facts on which Christianity rests. It is a dispensation of mildness, benignity, and mercy. Its entrance into the world was announced, not like the laws on Sinai to a dismayed and trembling people, by earthquakes, tempests, thunders, and blazing fires; but the song of angels was heard in the silence of midnight, "Glory to God in the highest, peace and good will to men." And he whose coming brought the host of heaven to proclaim joy to the shepherds of Judea, was found in all the innocence of a little child at the bosom of his virgin mother. His last scene was one of equally mild and peaceful magnificence. No terrors hung over the consecrated spot, where his disciples were gathered around their beloved master; but as his last instructions

were given, and he lifted up his hands to bless them, a bright cloud of glory received him, and he ascended slowly from their sight. There was here indeed every thing to produce admiration and astonishment, every thing to enkindle hope and triumph, but nothing to terrify and sadden; and as the vision departed, they bowed before him whom they were to see no more, and "returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

2. Again—it is interesting to remark the admirable consistency in what is recorded of the character of Jesus before his death, and at the time of his ascension. During his life, we ever find in him, for instance, a wonderful union of conciliating tenderness and awful dignity. At the tomb of Lazarus you remember how both these traits, apparently so irreconcilable, were manifested. First, you hear from him that sublime declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live;" and immediately after, you find him dissolved in tears of compassion. In his last conversation with his disciples, you remember with what tenderness he consoled them; yet at the same time, you hear him claiming the highest of all relations to God, and declaring that to his hands was the eternal life of all flesh committed. In Jesus, risen in glory from the grave, you discover the same union of tenderness and majesty, as when you beheld him a man of sorrows. At the period of his ascension he declares, "All

power is given unto me on earth and in heaven," and then bestows upon his followers the affectionate blessing of a departing friend. It is delightful to mark these touches of character, not only because they tend to call forth our love of Jesus, but also because they tend to confirm our faith. We are to consider that the history of Jesus is true, or else it is a wonderful fiction of genius. And how impossible to believe that four plain, unlettered men, writing not a labored panegyric, but separate accounts of a life, could have portrayed a character, uniting qualities so apparently irreconcilable, yet always so perfectly consistent, so supernatural, yet so familiar, unless the facts they record were true, and Jesus indeed had lived, taught, suffered, and died.

3. The ascension of Jesus confirms the divinity of his mission, in as much as it was the fulfilment of those prophetic assurances which he himself had given, that he soon should "leave the world and go to the Father." And the evidence which it affords of his divine mission, is peculiarly strong when considered in connexion with the circumstances of his past life. The condition of Jesus in the world was such as to induce prejudice and throw discredit on his claims. When he invited the belief of those among whom for thirty years he had familiarly lived, the answer was, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Do not his mother and his brethren dwell in the midst of us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" It was difficult to believe that one who had grown

up in the retirement of Nazareth, whom they had known so long and so intimately, should indeed be the long expected light of the nations, and deliverer of Israel. What prejudices too, would arise from other circumstances of his condition. A poor, despised, persecuted wanderer, without a place where to lay his head, followed by a few fishermen, and dying at last in the midst of malefactors—was this the Son of the most high God? Was this the promised Messiah, before whom kings should rise up, and in whose name the Gentiles should trust and all the families of man be blessed? We find that the condition of our Saviour was not without an effect of this kind at times on the minds of his immediate disciples. When he was apprehended, they lost all confidence in him; they forsook him. His death destroyed all their hopes; and notwithstanding his assurances that he should rise again, they could only say, "we trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel." And they seem for the time to have remembered him, more from the affection he had awakened, than from faith in him as the Messiah. But when they assembled around him on the mount, when the cloud of glory rose, and, surrounded with the splendors of heaven, he ascended in their sight, there was no more place for doubt. They could not but acknowledge him as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

4. We are taught to consider the exaltation of Jesus as the reward of his complete obedience to

the will of God. "We see Jesus," said an Apostle, "for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." His ascension was a visible token, that he had finished the work which he came to execute, and in all things had pleased the Father who sent him. Are we not all sent into the world by God, and has he not assigned to every one his work, and promised a reward of glory? We see in the exaltation of our Saviour a pledge of the glory we shall receive, if, like him, we strive to accomplish the will of God. Shall we not then run with patience the race set before us, when we look unto Jesus, our guide and our example in duty and in reward?

Consider also what was the peculiar characteristic of the obedience of our Saviour. It was an obedience of humiliation and suffering. "He humbled himself and was obedient even unto death; and *therefore* God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name." When Jesus was given up to the power of his enemies, and was expiring in an unpitied and unhallowed death, how ready was the presumption that he was forsaken of God. "He trusted in God," cried the Jews; "let Him deliver him if He will." Were he indeed God's beloved Son, would he have died a miserable outcast? Yet, though to the eye of men he seemed deserted, never was he an object of greater approbation and love to God. Humiliation and agony were here the price of reward, and the path to exalted glory.

And it is thus with his disciples in this world.

On earth they are to be tried and educated. God knows the various deficiencies of their characters, and the kind of discipline best adapted to cleanse and sanctify the heirs of his kingdom; and that discipline he calls them to bear. Hence the condition of the righteous is often a condition of trouble, and their path lies through a valley of darkness and tears. But God never deserts them. Oftentimes the very depth of their affliction is a measure of his divine mercy towards them. However desolate or despised by men, his presence ever encircles them, and his grace supports them; and when the ends of suffering are accomplished, it will flee away like the cloud of the morning, and be succeeded by light and gladness. When therefore your obedience is tested by the fires of affliction, cast not away your trust in God. Look unto Jesus, who once suffered and mourned, and now sees the travail of his soul and is satisfied; and whose ascension was an earnest of that bright reward, which awaits all who follow his steps with a patient faith.

5. The visible ascension of Christ is a confirmation of the promises he made his disciples. It was his last prayer, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may see and share my glory." * And the promise which consoled his disciples was, "I go to prepare a place for you; and I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I

* John xvii, 24. *comp.* 22.

am, there ye may be also." They now saw him rising to accomplish his promise, and to prepare those mansions in his Father's house which they were soon to enter. They were left to establish the religion he had founded, to carry the tidings of his salvation to every nation under heaven, and in its cause to bear hatred, distress, and death. But in the ascension of their Master, they saw the pledge of their own reward. And every Christian may find in it a support and confirmation to his dearest hopes. The reality of that future and unknown existence is more assured to us by the visible entrance of our Saviour upon it, than it could have been by the simple fact alone of his restoration to life. He has passed into the heavens as the forerunner of his people; and such as he now is, will all his followers hereafter be. It was as a man that he left the world, and ascended to the Father. We see in the person of Jesus, human nature now enthroned in glory. Christians, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And these bodies of dust, when death has dissolved them, will be fashioned like unto his glorious body, pure, active, ethereal, a fit residence for the immortal spirit.

Our Saviour prayed for his immediate followers, "not that they should be taken out of the world," but that the favor of God might preserve them "from the evil that is in it," until their course

should be finished, and the period of their salvation should come. We too are left, like them, to struggle with trial and temptation, and to devote ourselves to the service of our Master in a world of evil. And like them we are permitted, and we ought, often to look upward for strength and consolation. The interest of our Saviour in us has not terminated. We are taught to consider him, as still employed in the concerns of human salvation, protecting the church which he hath purchased and sanctified, ministering the spirit of grace to help the infirmities and sustain the efforts of believers, and the final dispenser from God of forgiveness and immortality. The idea of a mediator with God has found a place in almost every system of religion, and seems consonant to some of the profoundest feelings of the human heart. When we realize our own frailty, insignificance, and unworthiness, and think of the majesty of God—when, oppressed with the consciousness of guilt, we remember the purity of the Being whom we have offended, and hardly dare to rest even on his promises of mercy ;—how consoling is it to remember that we have an Intercessor on high, in whose name our supplications ever arise with acceptance, who knows how to succor us, for himself was tempted like as we are, and to whom all power is committed ! Seeing then we have such an High Priest, let us hold fast our profession, assured that while we endeavor faithfully to obey him, he will furnish all needful protection and strength, and will keep for us what we have entrusted to his hands.

"I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." What Christian should not find in this promise an incentive to a resolute obedience? Hereafter we shall see that being, to whom, under God, we owe all that is holy in this world and glorious in that to come; that being, whose mediation has rescued us from the miseries of guilt and the woes of eternal death; him, to whose instructions we owe all that guides, and consoles, and blesses. We shall be admitted to intimate converse with that friend, over the record of whose labors and sorrows, we have so often dwelt with a mournful delight, and whom we now rejoice to contemplate, as the glorified guardian and intercessor of our race. Blest with the friendship of Jesus, raised to live for ever under his care, to be the recipients of God's eternal favor,—to what exalted improvements, what unspeakable joys, what scenes of unknown glory, are we permitted to aspire! Shall we not act then in a manner which becomes this high destination? Shall that soul which may hereafter be allied to and mingle with angels, now be degraded and ruined by sin? Shall we forfeit all these hopes by thoughtless negligence, and cast away the inheritance of heaven for the shadows and trifles of a perishing world?

6. In the last place, the ascension of Christ is to be regarded in connexion with the most awful and magnificent event which our world shall ever witness. "Ye men of Galilee," said the angel

to the disciples, "why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is now taken from you, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Now, indeed, our Saviour was ascending, mild, benignant, with no circumstances of terror, and blessing all who stood around his feet. But in speaking of that day when he shall come to judge the earth, the scriptures address us by images, which cannot be deliberately contemplated without amazement and dismay. In that last convulsion of nature, the sun shall be turned into blackness, and the moon into blood, and the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the earth pass away with a great noise. Then shall the Son of Man come in his glory with all the holy angels, and with a mighty shout. And the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall arise, and all that ever breathed upon the earth shall stand before him in judgment. This is no fiction of the imagination. It is the simple, but awful revelation which the scriptures make of the last great day. There is not one individual who now hears me, who shall not hereafter personally witness its truth. Lo, he cometh in clouds, and every eye shall see him. We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive according to his deeds.

My friends, if these things are so, what should now be our conduct? Can any thing express the folly of excluding the subject from our thoughts—of neglecting to prepare for it with

earnest concern? Examine yourselves, and think, as in the presence of God, how you are prepared to meet it, and what must yet be done that you may meet it without dismay. Is there any duty which your conscience urges you to perform, and which you habitually neglect? Is there any sin in which you habitually indulge? If you have never seriously contemplated the day of judgment, do it now before it be too late. And if you do sometimes think of it, strive that the thought of it may be ever present. Let the remembrance go with you through all the scenes of life, and render you serious in your solitary hours. For God will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing whether it be good, or whether it be evil. How soon our own account may be sealed for ever, who shall tell us! To some of us, even now life is hastening to its close. I pray God, that when we do at last stand together before him, we may all give up our account with joy.

SERMON VIII.

THE GOLDEN RULE.

MATTHEW VII. 12.

ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM; FOR THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

In this discourse, I wish, first, to illustrate the general nature of the command in our text by guarding it against perversion; secondly, to speak of its excellence; and then to notice some of its applications.

1. The gospel is addressed to us as reasoning beings. It gives us general injunctions with respect to our conduct, considering us capable of understanding the spirit as well as the letter of the rule, of giving it a consistent interpretation, and of applying it in a rational manner. Our text is accordingly to be understood with those allowances which reason and religion require to be made for the different circumstances and conditions, and the various connexions, rights, and duties of men.

By the rule "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you," we are not requir-

ed to do to them, nor permitted to expect from them, what is clearly and plainly unreasonable. We are required to do no more to others, than we might, in sound reason and good conscience, desire them to do to us, were their condition ours. We are to demand no more from them, than we should feel ourselves in reason and conscience bound to do for them, were we in their condition. Our mere wishes are not to be the measure of our equity. Many wishes arise in our minds which we do not ourselves approve, and which we feel we ought to suppress; many are too idle, and many too extravagant to be indulged. We are not therefore bound to gratify all the wild wishes of others, because the gratification of our own would be pleasant.

There are in society necessary degrees of subordination. Some, from natural capacity, habits of living, condition in the world, offices in society, must be inferior to others. And the natural and necessary distinctions of society are not to be overlooked or disregarded. What we may reasonably expect from others or they may require from us, must therefore, in many cases and in various degrees, be affected by our relative condition in society and connexion with each other. We are not, in many particulars, to expect the same treatment from all, nor required to treat all alike.

Again, the various relations and conditions of life have certain duties necessarily annexed to them. These duties are not to be needlessly neglected or violated. So that in observance of the rule

of doing as we would be done by, we are required to do towards any particular person only what is consistent with the various and conflicting claims of others, who have an equal or superior right to our good offices, and to whom duties of equal obligation and importance are owed. No man, for instance, is to suffer others to encroach upon his property to the injury of those dependent on him, because he would like that others should treat him with the same easiness of disposition and false generosity; for by carelessly suffering himself to be defrauded he is unjust to his family, and does towards them what he would be unwilling they should do to him.

The purpose to be answered by the command of the text is, to provide protection for the happiness of others, and to guard us from doing injury to any whose welfare is affected by our conduct. In observing this rule, therefore, we are not to consider merely how we are to act towards any single object; but to take into view the more remote consequences which our actions may have on any others. We are not to do good to one, to the manifest injury of others. We may find it hard to refuse to a profligate beggar, what he desires, because we should feel unpleasantly to be denied were we in his situation. But by gratifying him we may injure others by tempting them to negligence, encouraging them in idleness and improvidence, and holding out indemnity to vice. We are not to be withheld from prosecuting a criminal and obtaining the execution of justice

upon him, by the thought that we might wish our own crimes to go unpunished; because we should thus injure society, weaken the strength of the laws, and impair those sanctions which are necessary to preserve public order, secure the common safety, and keep a restraint upon the bad passions of men. It would be unjust for a magistrate to extend pardon to a convicted criminal, who merited only punishment; though, if guilty himself, he would doubtless desire forgiveness and indemnity. Because the magistrate is not a private individual; he represents the community, whose rights he is to guard, and of whose justice he is but the minister. By granting an undeserved pardon, he gives away what he has no right to bestow; and by showing unmerited lenity, he does not prevent but invites future injuries and aggressions, and impairs among the profligate that dread of certain punishment which preserves peace in society. In such cases, the mischiefs arising from our conduct we should not be willing to have brought upon ourselves by the imprudence or misconduct of others; and we are therefore to take care that we do not bring them upon others by our own indolence, easiness of disposition, imprudence, or unfaithfulness. In all such cases we comply with the spirit of the rule, if we exercise towards the particular object before us, those feelings of sympathy and kindness, which will preserve us from treating him with injustice, oppression, and needless severity.

But however difficult it may be to fence in the rule in the abstract against misunderstanding and

perversion, the practical application of it is in all cases sufficiently easy. Every man's own reason and experience readily teach him with what limitations the command is to be interpreted, and every one's own conscience must and will guide him rightly to apply it in every particular case which occurs in his intercourse with others.

2. The propriety and excellence of the command to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us, approves itself immediately to the reason of all.

The rule is founded on the common nature of man. All have similar wants to be supplied, feelings to be consulted, infirmities to be overlooked; all are capable of happiness and equally desire it, and all are exposed to danger and to suffering. It is not we ourselves, who have made us what we are and caused us to differ. We owe it to the appointment of God and to the courses of his providence, that our condition is as it is; and had he chosen, we might have stood in the place of any around us; and looked to them for the benefits which they now seek from us. And whatever be our condition, we stand not insulated and alone; our happiness is greatly dependent on others, and in a thousand various ways we continually need their protection, support, and aid. We owe to them the same offices of benevolence, which we are constantly receiving. Who knows what our condition may hereafter be? The dispensations of providence and the natural vicissitudes of time are introducing changes into our situation; and

we may soon stand in the same relation of dependence on others, in which they now stand to us. There is no individual so low in the world, whose kindness may not at some time hereafter be important to us; whose aid may not be necessary, whose good opinion may not be valuable, who may not have it in his power to benefit or injure us. So that it is the dictate of prudence, as well as of religion, to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us.

And experience sanctions the law. There is, after all, so much of justice and generosity among men, benevolence is so amiable, and kind example so persuasive, that in most cases we receive in some proportion from others the measure we mete to them, and find in this world the reward of equity and benevolence. When this rule is acted upon, it greatly promotes our own happiness. It enables us to rejoice in the comfort and enjoyment of others; for if we were happy, should we not desire them to rejoice with us? It saves us from all the pains of envy, hatred, malice, selfishness, and inordinate ambition. And in proportion as it should be more widely felt, the animosities of society would cease, violence and injury be unknown, the unavoidable sufferings of life be mitigated, and order, harmony, and mutual protection, aid, and kindness be everywhere extended. These effects of this rule for our intercourse prove its excellence.

Again, this rule for our conduct is excellent from its simplicity. It is so plain, that all can under-

stand and none need mistake it; so concise, that every memory can easily retain it; so comprehensive, that it is applicable to our whole intercourse with others. It is a rule always the same to all, for it is founded on the common principles of our nature and exigencies of our condition. It requires no labored train of reasoning, no long deliberation, to enable us to apply it to our conduct. We have but to look to our own hearts, to remember what our own reasonable wants and wishes might be, and to conduct ourselves toward our neighbor as these would lead us to need or desire. It contains a motive also to right conduct, by its appeal to our feelings. It is a bringing things home to ourselves, which excites sympathy, and enables us effectually to enter into the feelings, understand the wants, and be interested in the comfort and pleasures, of others. It is thus the only effectual antidote to selfishness. The gospel, when it calls us to do unto others as we would they should do unto us, demands no unnatural or unreasonable disregard of our own welfare; it would not extinguish the necessary, and, when rightly controlled, innocent principle of self-love; it only requires that the love of our neighbor should keep pace with the love of ourselves. We determine amiss with respect to the rights and reasonable expectations of others, from the bias which self-love gives to us to consult our own exclusive interest. But by making our own self-love the measure of what we owe to our neighbor, by calling us to place ourselves in the situation of others, the

same selfish principle makes us to see that to be hard and unreasonable in our treatment of our neighbor, which otherwise we might approve.

The excellence of the command to do as we would be done by is peculiarly evident on account of its comprehensiveness and universal application. It extends to our whole intercourse with others; includes all the demands of justice and charity; teaches both what we are to do, and what we are to refrain from doing. It furnishes a rule for our manners, conversations, judgments, and diversions, as well as for our conduct in the competitions, and interferences, and serious engagements of active life. It produces an universal disposition to integrity and fair dealing; to candor and gentleness, a readiness to serve, assist, oblige, or please our neighbor, in every various way in which our protection and aid is needed, or in which our kindness may be shown.

3. If then we will do as we would be done by, we cannot long hesitate in what manner we ought in any case to conduct toward our neighbor. What do we feel when we are sensible that others "undervalue or triumph over us, though but in thought?" that their minds are secretly prejudiced against us, that our feelings are misunderstood, our motives secretly suspected, our sincerity distrusted, our virtues overlooked; that the judgments of others respecting us, though unexpressed, are harsh, uncharitable, and unjust? We are then to be careful in forming our own opinions of others. We are to avoid taking up unfound-

ed prejudices, misrepresenting them in our own imaginations, dwelling on their defects and overlooking their excellences. We are in our own minds to seek out good motives, when good ones are possible; in every case to make allowances for their peculiar situations, natural dispositions, past education, general habits of thinking, feeling and acting, and peculiar temptations and disadvantages. We are not to expect the same manners, and conduct from all, and we are bound, in forming our judgments respecting them, to exercise that justice and charity, which we are always so solicitous to have exercised towards ourselves.

When the severe and censorious opinions of others are expressed; when our words are openly misrepresented, our actions ascribed to the worst motives, our real faults of disposition or errors of conduct exposed and magnified; when unreal defects are positively ascribed, and all that is praiseworthy is passed over with silence or a slur;—when this is known to us, how much do we suffer! and how valuable that friend, who is willing at such times to stand forth in our defence, to rescue us from misrepresentation, unmerited censure, and the cruelties of a slanderous tongue! Let these feelings teach us what our duty is toward others; and whenever we are inclined to speak of them with undeserved severity, uncharitableness, or contempt; when we are prompted by an idle vanity, or the love of talking, or the hope of distinction, to impair or destroy their

good name; let us bring the thought home to ourselves; let us remember with what anxiety we watch over our own reputation, and with what distressful feelings of indignation and sorrow we ever learn the injury it has sustained, by the folly, or carelessness of others. And whenever we have it in our power to protect the good name of others, or to redeem it from reproach, let us remember the rule "do to others as you would that they should do to you;" and it will give us boldness to correct ignorant misrepresentations, to prevent idle assertions, and to restrain wilful calumny.

Again, very much of the happiness of ordinary life depends on the kindness of outward manners in those whom we meet. We dread finding in others a contemptuous, positive, and overbearing spirit in conversation, a disposition to ridicule, deride and mortify, an irritable, sour, unconciliating temper. Neglect, as well as insult, wounds us. When we have offended them we desire to be forgiven; and a continued and implacable animosity, though exercised in little things, afflicts and torments us. We wish others to bear with our infirmities, to understand our trifling and nameless wants, and to care for us so much, as always to avoid giving us pain, and to feel and express some sympathy in even our unimportant vexations and distresses. On these little circumstances we feel our own comfort much dependent. The comfort of others is equally affected by our manners

towards them; and we are alike bound to consult the comfort and gratification of each other.

Again, we ought peculiarly to remember the command in the text, and "do unto others as we would that they should do unto us," when others need our aid, or have claims on our justice or benevolence; when events or circumstances important to their welfare are dependent on our conduct, or when our own interest is apparently in competition with theirs. And no illustration is needed to make it perfectly evident, that we violate the very letter of the command, whenever we treat others with cruelty and rigor, conduct ourselves towards them with a spirit of animosity, jealousy, and revenge,—needlessly thwart their plans, bring them into difficulty, discourage their honest exertions, or render them ineffectual; whenever we decline to give them that assistance which they reasonably desire, neglect their wants and sorrows, and refuse them the relief which they deserve, which it is in our power to give, and which charity commands us to bestow; and we most flagrantly violate it, whenever we deny to them their just rights, withhold their earned dues, deal with them dishonestly, violate our engagements explicit or implied, or are unfaithful to them in any trust, office, or relation.

There is certainly some ground for the question, whether this rule of christian equity is not more generally forgotten and more frequently violated in the various concerns of commerce, and in the mutual competitions of men of business, than in

any other of the intercourses of life. Is it not too generally imagined, that in all the concerns of business we are to consult our own interest merely, and to leave it entirely to those with whom we treat, to watch over their own? Is it not often thought, that obedience to the laws of the land is sufficient, and that we are at liberty to take any advantage of our neighbor, which the letter of the law does not expressly forbid? And are there not instances of injustice and iniquity practised in cases to which the written rules of society do not particularly reach, or practised under cover of abused and perverted laws? We have certainly no right to employ any species of deception or fraud toward others, because we believe they would in a similar case use the same toward us. The want of justice and equity in others, is not to be the measure or standard for our conduct. It is not allowed us to take any undue advantage of others, because we may be willing that they should take a similar advantage to our prejudice whenever it may be in their power.* For we have no right to injure another in his property, though we are at liberty to dispose of our own. If we be willing that he should injure us, and he does it, there is no violation of strict justice, for he has our consent to do it; but if we take any advantage of him to his manifest injury, before we are assured of his consent, we violate the rules of both justice and equity.

Some of the most common instances of viola-

* Foster's Natural Religion.

ting this rule of christian equity are, taking an unlimited advantage of the necessities of others; abusing their implicit confidence and the trust they repose in our fairness, integrity, and honor; taking advantage of the ignorance of those with whom we deal, concealing some circumstances, adding others, or giving a false coloring to all, in order to obtain or secure a profitable bargain; overreaching by any kind of misrepresentation of the value, soundness, or quality of what is sold or bought. Another instance is, when in the course of business we obtain from others a credit which we have no rational prospect of repaying; and wilfully incur debts, which it is clear we shall not be able to discharge. And another instance of greater flagrancy, is when we refuse to others the payment of their equitable debts, if the means of doing it, though once lost, are again in our power, because we are screened from the necessity of paying them by those merciful provisions of public law, which were designed only to save the deserving and unfortunate from oppression and extreme distress. Whoever should put any of these cases home to himself, would instantly feel himself injured and defrauded; and it becomes us therefore to look to our own conduct, and in these, and in all the concerns of business, to do to others in no respect, what, when done to us, we should feel to be inequitable and unjust.

To conclude—"whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." You have seen,

I trust, the reasonableness of the rule, and the extent of its application. The language of our Saviour teaches us its importance. Most of the practical duties of life relate to our intercourse with one another; and we are left from the text to infer, that these are the essential acts of religion. For the neglect of these, no loud professions or fervors of zeal will atone; and that religious character is essentially defective, which wants a sound and controlling principle of equity and disinterested kindness, manifested by doing, in our whole intercourse with others, what we would that they should do unto us.

SERMON IX.

OBLIGATION AND OPPORTUNITIES TO DO GOOD.

GALATIANS VI. 10.

AS WE HAVE THEREFORE OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD UNTO ALL MEN.

THERE is something very observable in the simplicity and minuteness of a great part of the practical instructions of the gospel. General and comprehensive laws are not only laid down, but particular directions are given to illustrate and exemplify their spirit. From the most sublime and magnificent revelations of God and futurity, we find our Saviour and his apostles meekly descending to prescribe rules which are to regulate the most ordinary concerns of life. We find them entering into the minute details of our common conduct, pointing out the manner in which we should make the noblest doctrines of Christianity bear upon them, and designing to communicate a religious character to them all. This certainly evinces a great unaffectedness in the first teachers of the gospel, and manifests

with what wisdom, truth, and tenderness the christian system is adapted to the actual circumstances, and the various connexions and wants of men.

This general remark is peculiarly applicable to those precepts which prescribe the duties of benevolence. We are not merely told that no man liveth to himself, and that each one is therefore bound to have a general reference in his own conduct to the improvement and happiness of those around him; we are not merely commanded in general to do good and communicate, to withhold no benefit from those to whom it is due, to minister to others the gifts we have received as the good stewards of the manifold bounties of God; but we are exhorted with most affectionate and benevolent particularity, to study to please our neighbor, to bear with the infirmities of the weak, to comfort those who are feeble in mind, and to be gentle in our tempers, easy of access, and tender in heart. Give, said our Saviour, to him that asketh, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. Let him that giveth, give with simplicity, and him that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. In these cases the very mode of conferring favors is enjoined, the mode of frank and unaffected kindness. Be courteous, is an apostolic injunction. Here our very manners are designed to be regulated; and general courtesy, affability, willingness to accommodate, and endeavors to

give pleasure in trivial concerns, are made a part of the duty of a Christian. In the life of our Saviour, we see even these lesser precepts of his gospel exemplified. His first miracle was wrought to promote the innocent cheerfulness of a marriage feast. There was a peculiar delicacy and tenderness manifested in his whole intercourse with others, which tempered the awful sublimity of his character, and rendered him the amiable and beloved friend of his uncultivated disciples, and of the sisters at Bethany. When little children were brought to him, with what meek and touching simplicity he took them in his arms and blessed them. And with what refined gentleness of manner were some of his mightiest miracles performed. When he raised the widow's only son from the dead, he himself delivered him to his mother; and who can forget the inimitable tenderness, as well as awful majesty, with which he stood over the tomb of Lazarus, and called the departed to life.

By the precepts of scripture and the example of our Saviour, we are thus taught the extent of that practical benevolence, which men are commanded to cultivate and exercise. The charity of the gospel is not confined to great occasions. We are to do good unto all men *as we have opportunity*, however trifling or transient the opportunity may be. We are to cultivate and maintain that comprehensive and living principle of benevolence, which waits not for powerful excitement to call it into action, but which is constantly

manifesting itself on unimportant occasions, and in deeds of minute and unsolicited kindness. We are to acquire the habit of seizing on all those opportunities which are presented to us, of promoting in any way the comfort and happiness of others.

The modes in which we may do good are as various as the situations in which we are placed, or as the circumstances and wants of those around us. Many seem to imagine, that all the opportunities of benevolence are confined to the rich, and fancy themselves relieved from all responsibility, and from all obligation to exercise christian benevolence, if God has not given them wealth. But the endless diversity in the wants and sufferings of men puts it in the power of every one to render those around him in some way more happy. In every condition, however destitute or distressed, in the hand of every individual, however deserted and despised, there are some means of doing good. Every man has around him a circle of other beings, on whose comfort and welfare he may exert an important influence, whose wants of mind and body he may in some degree relieve, whose sorrows and anxieties he may mitigate or remove, and whose improvement he may essentially promote. Whatever then our situation in the world may be, there is room in it for some important exercise of christian charity. They, indeed, who are poor in circumstances and low in rank, are deprived of many means and opportunities of active benevo-

lence; yet the benefits which they may confer on others, if they are less extensive, are often more important, than any riches could enable them to bestow. At least they have many means and constant opportunities of doing good, for whose right improvement they are responsible. And these lesser services, when rightly performed, will rise as acceptably to God, as though the gift were more costly, and the benefit more extensive. In a word, the exhortation of the text, and other corresponding precepts of the gospel, call upon us to examine our own circumstances and conditions, and to learn the means which we really possess of giving relief, or of promoting happiness,—and then to do good, to whatever degree, and in whatever manner, God has placed it in our power. We are, in the exercise of benevolence, to rise as nearly as we can to the level of the occasion which demands it from us; to manifest the charity of the gospel, by signal, or by trivial acts, according as the opportunity may be given; and at all times to make it our serious and deliberate endeavor, to mitigate the sufferings and advance the happiness of all within our reach.

Such are the high, extensive and never ceasing obligations of christian benevolence. As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men.

The obligation to benevolence, so far as almsgiving is concerned, all readily perceive; and for these acts of charity, opportunities are never wanted. But the wants and sufferings of men are not so limited that all can be thus relieved.

There are sorrows more heavy to be borne, than those of bodily privation; and benefits equally important to be conferred, as those which relate to the support and comfort of this earthly frame. Dismissing therefore the subject of alms-giving, let us attend to some of the common opportunities of doing good, which, perhaps, we are not sufficiently accustomed to consider as embraced in the requirements of the gospel, or constituting part of duty.

1. In our common intercourse with those with whom we are intimately connected, in our families and among our friends, there are opportunities incessantly given of doing good. In these connexions, occasions for signal acts of benevolence are indeed of infrequent occurrence; and when they do occur, we are bound, not merely by charity, but by justice, to render them. The common course of domestic life is made up of trivial occurrences, and of circumstances which, when singly considered, are of inconsiderable importance; but on which, from their continual recurrence, our daily happiness does, in fact, almost entirely depend. On all these little occasions, it becomes a part of christian duty to manifest a temper of gentleness and kindness. By what trifling circumstances the peace and comfort of a family are often essentially affected! There are continually occurring little inconveniences which we may obviate, petty irritations which our mildness may sooth, unimportant comforts which our kindness may provide, wishes, too trivial to be

uttered, which we may anticipate, and gratifications, casual and momentary, which affection will discover and communicate. Our own feelings are often unpleasantly excited, and if we vent them, we shall give pain. Inconveniences frequently annoy us, which, if we endure them with discontent and impatience, will render the situation of those around us uncomfortable; and heedless expressions rise to our lips, which, if uttered, will irritate or wound. Who does not know, that it is on these little, but constantly returning cares for the comfort of others,—on these minute acts of kindness, these nameless attentions, these transient but often repeated endeavors to give pleasure, that the habitual happiness of a family is almost entirely dependent? It is not when the clouds pour down torrents, that we see nature flourish around us. It is the dews, which descend silent and unseen, and are known only by their effects, that renew the exhausted herbage, and cause creation to smile upon us in freshness and beauty. And it is the constant influences of a mild and gentle spirit, evinced in continual though almost unnoticed acts of kindness, which principally produce the daily happiness of domestic life. These offices, trifling as they may seem, are not below our regard, nor beyond the rules of christian duty. Nothing is unimportant, or to be neglected, which can render those whom nature and affection have bound to us more happy. The gospel solemnly enjoins a spirit, which will prompt to these minor acts of kindness, and

which we are to exercise whenever the opportunity is given.

The same kindness of temper, and exertions to communicate happiness, which we are to manifest within the circle of family and friends, we should, in the next place, carry into our common intercourse with the world. We cannot mingle long in society without meeting some one, to whom some trifling act of ours, some slight attention or expression of interest, will give pleasure. In the common intercourse of business, we may waive for a time our own interest, or forbear to press with rigor our own just rights, and thus save our neighbor from perplexity or distress. And how often are occasions arising, when a generous and benevolent spirit may save another from needless labor and severe inconvenience, and turn anxiety, depression, and fatigue into gaiety and peace. These casual and transient occasions of producing happiness, we are bound as Christians not to overlook. When we bear another's burden, though it be not a severe one, we discharge a duty of benevolence, and so far fulfil the law of Christ.

2. The sicknesses and afflictions of others furnish us with very frequent opportunities of doing them good. There are diseases of the imagination which we can sooth. From some trifling, or some unknown cause, from bodily indisposition or disappointed hope, the spirits of the cheerful sometimes sink, and the mind of the happy is overwhelmed with sadness. Now, every thing around them seems dark and foreboding; all the

difficulties and inconveniences of their situation are swollen and aggravated; nothing is anticipated but disappointment, mortification, and suffering, and all the opening prospects of life are gloomy and disconsolate. It is true, these evils may be only those of fancy, and the disease that of the imagination; but the suffering is real, and oftentimes severe. And when the tone of the mind is thus weakened, the sufferer cannot relieve himself, but must look around for others to dissipate his gloom, and restore him to cheerfulness and peace. Now seasons such as these give opportunities for the exercise of christian benevolence. If by our conversation or our manners, by trifling attentions, or expressions of concern and kindness, by removing fancied difficulties, or by turning the attention to juster views and fairer prospects of life, we can take off the weight of sadness, and raise the drooping and dejected spirit, we perform no unimportant act of kindness. We certainly obey the precepts of the gospel, which calls us to bear with the infirmities of others, and on every opportunity, and in every way, to do good to our neighbor.

But there are other sicknesses than those of imagination. When God has visited our neighbor with acute or lingering disease; when the powers of nature are sinking, and the mind is feeble and irritable; when the appetite fails, and the limbs are pained, and the body is restless, and the slumbers of night are troubled and wakeful;—who knows not how many and how various are

the opportunities of imparting relief, satisfaction, or pleasure? Have you never found, by your own experience, how much comfort may be given to the sick by the most trifling acts of kindness? Has your own lively gratitude never been awakened by expressions of interest or tokens of attention, too trivial to be named? These offices of benevolence, then, you should render in return to others. Mark the particularity in the words of our Saviour, "I was sick, and ye visited me;" and it will teach you that these trifling acts of kindness are important enough, to be enjoined as a part of christian duty.

There are no seasons which afford greater opportunities of doing good, than those of affliction. When death has taken away the supports on which we have leaned, and torn from us the objects of our affection, how involuntarily do we look to others for strength and consolation! However familiar in speculation the topics of consolation may be to the mind of the afflicted, he finds it hard, if not impossible, to summon them up before him, to apply them to his own situation, and to dwell upon them till he is comforted. He needs that others should direct his mind, should open before him these consoling views, and present them with direct application to his own distress. Ask of those who have been afflicted, and they will tell you, that it requires no novelty of thought, no originality or elegance of expression, to give them comfort. And there is no one, who has not felt in some degree relieved

and soothed by the most simple expression of sympathy and condolence. This both furnishes an opportunity and puts it in the power of all, to mitigate the distress and promote the happiness of those whom God has smitten. And we ought not to forget how strongly and how particularly this mode of evincing benevolence is recommended in the gospel. We are called to weep with those that weep, and to comfort those that mourn; and the religion of Christ is forcibly described in not only "keeping ourselves unspotted from the world," but in visiting in their affliction the fatherless and widow, and every child of mourning.

3. The mutual connexions and dependences between different members of society give rise to many occasions for the exercise of christian benevolence. Numberless cases constantly occur, in which, by taking an interest in the concerns of others, we may do them important and permanent good. We may give them opportunities, which otherwise they might not have, of exercising their industry, of acquiring knowledge, of improving their characters, or of promoting their temporal interest. Some are thrown into situations of difficulty and embarrassment, from which our influence may rescue them. The distressed may need a friend, whom our kindness may provide; or the helpless suffer injuries, which our interference may redress. Here, friends are separated by some secret misunderstanding, which it may be in our power to remove; or there, a quarrel

is rising between neighbors, which our mediation may prevent. These acts of charity often require but little exertion; and we need only to remember the blessing which our Saviour has pronounced on the peace makers, to prompt and sustain our exertions. In a more common case, how often do you hear a character called in question or rudely calumniated, which you may with boldness defend; or suspicions awakened, which a slight explanation will remove; or faults and errors attributed to another, whose virtues have been forgotten, but which you can easily mention and display. Kindness like this is indeed of no trifling importance; it is sometimes the greatest we can render. The worth of character all feel, and to many it is dearer than life. Whenever such opportunities are given, remember then that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves; that we are to watch over and protect his assaulted reputation with the care and zeal, with which we should wish him to watch over ours.

Another mode of doing good to others is by advice and instruction. There is no one who does not possess knowledge of some kind, of which those around him are destitute, and which, on many occasions, he may easily communicate, to render them more wise, more useful, or more happy. They, whom instruction or practice has made skilful in the professions and arts of life, may often confer an important benefit on the ignorant and unpractised, by counsel and direction. The aged, whom experience has made

wise, and to whom the young look with reverence, may in this way exert an important influence on their characters and their happiness. In youth the world wears a delusive brightness, and the young adventurer needs constantly the caution which experience alone can give. His false views of men and things need to be corrected, and his heedless and improper intimacies to be guarded against. The dangers which threaten, and the temptations which will soon assail him, should be pointed out; and the consequences which will follow his present conduct, and the first steps he may take in the world, should be illustrated and enforced. Many, probably, have suffered through life, for want of such salutary cautions and lessons of wisdom as the aged can easily give. There may be also difficulties or embarrassments in the circumstances of some around us, from which our advice or encouragement may extricate them; and there are those within our reach, whom a word of counsel or of warning may perhaps reclaim from wanderings, which otherwise will end in ruin and despair.

4. This leads me, in the last place, to remark, that opportunities are constantly occurring of doing the greatest good to others, which it is in the power of human beings to render, by promoting their religious improvement, rescuing them from guilt, and aiding their preparation for heaven. Some there are, who, from mere inconsideration, are living in the neglect of most im-

portant duties; and others, who are intending to discharge them, need to have their determinations quickened, and their resolutions made effectual. Some are now forming slight habits of transgression, apparently unconscious how rapidly these habits will increase, and become rigid and powerful. Others there are, whose own consciences are silently and ineffectually warning them, but who would obey its voice and reform, if made sensible that others know their faults. And there are those, in habits of open and frequent sin, whom a solemn warning or an affectionate entreaty might yet save from guilt and wo, and guide to holiness and God. These are occasions, Christians, in which you are bound as far as possible to interpose, and by your counsels, your secret admonitions, your serious expostulations, and your affectionate entreaties, to strive to convince the guilty of the error of his ways, and to excite and encourage him to a sincere repentance. Who knows not the influence which the faithful advice of a friend may have? Who can tell the consequences which may flow from a word of serious and affectionate counsel? And who can describe that joy of heart, which must arise to him who has redeemed a human being from guilt, and saved a soul from eternal death?

But this exercise of christian benevolence is not to be confined to the reformation of the guilty. All need to be enlightened with clearer views of christian truth, to be more strongly convinced of their obligations and duties, to be more deeply

impressed with the motives of the gospel, and to have their religious affections rendered more vigorous, more tender, and more operative. We are bound, as Christians, to produce these effects on all whom we can influence, and to strive on every fit occasion, to render our intercourse with others a means of strengthening their principles of piety, and leading them to lives of more exalted purity, benevolence, and godliness. If opportunities of directly advancing this end are not often given, or if timidity or diffidence discourage us from immediately improving them, we can at least instruct and edify by our own example; and it should be our serious and constant endeavor, by letting our light of piety shine before men, to persuade them to glorify by their lives our common Father in heaven.

I have thus endeavored to set before you a few of the opportunities which are constantly occurring to all, in every condition of life, of doing good to others. Some of them may, at first sight, appear trivial; but the sum of happiness we may produce by a right improvement of them, is great and extensive. We are to remember too, that the principle and habit of benevolence are strengthened by every exercise, whether the effect produced by each single exertion be important or trifling. Great occasions for deeds of benevolence seldom occur to any of us; and not at all to some. It becomes us, therefore, to carry this christian temper into common life, and to manifest and strengthen it by those minor acts of

charity and kindness, which our daily intercourse with others constantly demands.

The views which we have taken should lead us to feel the extent and continual recurrence of the requirements of christian benevolence. Let us faithfully endeavor to fulfil them, that we may be indeed the disciples of him, who when on earth, "went about doing good;" and may at last be the accepted servants of that God, who "sends his rain on the just and on the unjust," and bestows his mercies, with parental liberality, even on the ungrateful and disobedient.

SERMON X.

CAUSING OTHERS TO OFFEND.

MATTHEW XVIII. 6.

WHOSO SHALL OFFEND ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES WHICH BELIEVE IN ME, IT WERE BETTER FOR HIM THAT A MILLSTONE WERE HANGED ABOUT HIS NECK, AND THAT HE WERE DROWNED IN THE DEPTH OF THE SEA.

In the original language, the text conveys a meaning somewhat different from that, which the English reader would derive from our translation. The word here rendered *offend*, should be rendered *cause to offend*. Our Saviour is not designing to reprove those, who irritate his disciples; but those, who would in any way withdraw them from their christian profession, weaken their faith, unsettle their principles, or cause them to neglect or violate his commands. The language of our Saviour leads us to regard this as a sin of high enormity; for there is hardly any one which is more solemnly denounced. "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones to offend, it were better for him that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Alas, for the world, because of causes

of offending! It must needs be that causes of offending come; but wo unto that man, by whom the cause of offending cometh! Yet, solemn and comprehensive as the prohibition is, it relates to a subject of duty, which many are accustomed entirely to overlook, and which few, perhaps, consider in a sufficiently serious light.

It is wonderful to remark the powerful influence, which one being exerts on the character of another. Let any one look back on the past, and he will find with astonishment how little his own character has been formed by his own exertions, and how constantly it has been receiving impressions from deliberate instruction, occasional conversation, and casual or habitual intercourse with others. We seem to be almost passively acted upon by those around us. Their remarks are giving a turn to our minds, and opening them to new views of life and duty; they are imperceptibly changing our feelings, impairing the liveliness of some, and quickening others to animation and vigor; and our intercourse with them, in all its various influences, seems to give an almost entire direction to our modes of thinking and acting. This influence is reciprocal. While they are thus operating upon us, we are, in equal unconsciousness, operating on them. The expression of our views and opinions, the frequent manifestations of our dispositions and feelings, and the general course of our conduct, are exerting a silent and powerful influence, in changing and

forming their sentiments, feelings, and habits. To this, as to every other kind of influence, a deep responsibility is attached. We are equally accountable for the effect, which we are thus silently producing on the consciences, moral feelings, and conduct of others, as for the effect which we may, in any way, have on their external situation and temporal welfare. And the obligation is very imperative upon us, to render this influence a means of their moral improvement, and to watch carefully over ourselves, lest we cause them to offend. I hope it may serve to put us habitually more on our guard, to remark on some of the modes in which we may cause others to offend.

1. Our conversation is a means by which we exert a powerful influence on the minds of those about us; and we may, in this way, affect the faith of others.

We sometimes find men in society, who, from a proud unwillingness to hold opinions which are common to others; from excessive self-conceit; from vicious dispositions and habits, joined with an ignorance of the evidences of Christianity; are unbelievers in its truth. And it is generally the case with men of this character, that they are desirous to weaken or unsettle the convictions of others. Sometimes they will attack the young or the ignorant, with sophistical arguments or bold misrepresentation of facts; will urge objections whose force themselves do not allow; or by daring assertions, endeavor to throw discredit on

particular proofs by which revelation is supported. At other times they are content with general expressions of their own infidelity, and of contempt for those who are so weak as to believe; or with throwing out, in seeming carelessness, a remark which does not directly attack the truth of revelation, but which serves to introduce suspicion and distrust. Men of this character, especially when they possess strong powers of mind, or fascinating qualities, often produce a most unhappy influence. The young and weak, whose minds are impressible, and whose principles are unformed, are easily turned from the truth. There are few, too, in comparison with the bulk of mankind, whose belief is the result of deliberate inquiry, or has been defined and settled by serious reflection; and without this, they are generally unprepared for objections, and their faith often sinks under the attack. What injury can be inflicted so great, as to destroy in any mind that faith, on which all the hopes of man are built? Or what depravity can surpass his, who would devote his powers to such an end? Were we to address such a one we would ask, What is there in Christianity, or in its influence, which leads you to wish its destruction? Why would you extinguish, in any mind, that religion which gives such animation to virtue, and lays such restraints upon vice? Why would you destroy that power, which so softens, so refines and elevates the human character? Why would you rob us of those truths, which

have sustained the poor and dejected amidst disappointment and trouble, which alone can comfort the heart of the penitent, or bring consolation to the afflicted, amidst the ruins of death? Why would you take from the young that light, which alone can guide them amidst the uncertainties and trials of this world of danger? Why would you bereave the aged of their support and their hope? Why would you plant thorns in the pillow of the sick, and turn the prospects of the dying to discomfort and despair?

It is true indeed, that we do not often meet those, who are willing deliberately to attack the truth of Christianity, though many, who now are gone to their reward, will long be remembered, by the disastrous influence of their writings. But there is a mode of causing others to offend in faith, which among irreligious men is not unfrequent. When the authority of revelation is made the subject of doubt or derision, or the system itself is treated with levity, the influence of christianity may be as much annihilated, as though belief in its truth were destroyed. There is no subject which may not be represented in a ridiculous point of view, or to which it is not in the power of man, to attach some association of weakness or meanness. There are those who are willing to do this, on the awful and magnificent subject of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not that they always design to destroy its credit, or weaken its authority; but in their moments of elated vanity, when they burn with desires of display, or

in seasons of jovial riot, or careless dissipation, they will exercise their powers of wit on the truths of religion,—will introduce its subjects with indecent familiarity,—by misrepresenting its instructions, will give it an appearance of wildness or folly,—or by connecting it with the vices of pretended believers, or the defects of inconsistent and narrow minded professors, will exhibit the whole system, under an aspect of contemptible hypocrisy, or of vulgar meanness. The influence of this, when its immediate effect is not more fatal, is to cause others to turn from Christianity with disgust, or disdainful indifference; and to imagine, not merely, that it has no claims on their deliberate faith and their constant obedience, but that it has none even on their serious and respectful attention. Where this is the case, the power of the gospel is gone. It will no longer be appealed to as the fountain of truth, and the guide of conduct; and all its venerable instructions, and promises of glory, and denunciations of wo, will cease to bring with them any feeling of solemnity, or to have any effectual influence on the heart or life. Is not this, that causing others to offend, which our Saviour so solemnly reprobates? Wo unto that man, by whom the cause of offending cometh!

Again. Few people are sufficiently sensible, what an influence their careless assertions and unguarded remarks may have on those who hear them. We all can probably remember, what instantaneous and deep impressions have been

made on our minds by some casual remark, or even by the force of some single expression. Many, without doubt, can trace some peculiar mode of thinking, or some prevailing feeling or habit, to some observation, which fell carelessly from the lips of another. When loose and random remarks are made on the truths or laws of religion, their tendency is most mischievous. They often impair or unsettle the principles of the young, and create a feeling of distrust and uncertainty on the subjects of religion; and they yet more frequently destroy that reverence, with which God's revelation of his will ought ever to be approached, and without which no good impression will be made. Perhaps there is no subject on which the views of the unreflecting are equally susceptible of influence and change, from careless remarks, as on that of religion. And we cannot be too careful in guarding, especially with the young, against every expression of levity, against every remark which may impair the authority, or weaken the influence of christian truth, or destroy the reverence and seriousness, with which it should ever be regarded.

In the next place, we may sometimes, though in a far less degree, injure the religious character of others, by the manner in which we treat the peculiar speculative opinions which they hold. Devotional feelings, in the minds of many, are greatly dependent on the peculiar speculative views which they entertain. Where the mind has long been settled in the belief of any particular

sentiment; where that has been the foundation or support of any important habits; and pious emotions, devout reflections, and hallowed hopes, have sprung up and clustered around it; we may often do great injury, by overturning the particular view on which the whole structure is reared. In a weak or ignorant mind, the destruction of any opinion which it held certain and sacred, often throws a distressing suspicion and distrust, over all its remaining views of religious truth. We can hardly conceive a more painful state of mind, than must be experienced by an aged and uncultivated Christian, when, by some rude attack, the old foundations of his faith have been broken up, the opinions which years have consecrated, with all their associations of devotional sentiment and pious feeling and hope, are swept away, and doubt and distrust are overspreading the mind with anxiety and sadness. It is not meant that we are never to attempt to change the opinions of the aged, or correct the errors of the ignorant. Where their errors are in themselves dangerous, it is a most solemn duty to do it. But we are to do it with delicacy, caution, and prudence. And if their errors are not of primary importance in themselves, and have been to them sources of consolation and motives to a godly life, the error will do them less injury than we shall probably do by overturning it. The apostolic direction ought in all these cases to be before us. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." And it should lead us, in every

interference with the speculative and unessential opinions of others, not only to charitable constructions, but to a delicate and prudent consideration of their peculiar infirmities and dangers.

2. We may cause others to offend, by impairing their principles of conduct, as well as their faith.

Few are so thoroughly corrupt, as with deliberate intention, to endeavor to break down in others the principles of virtue, or to render them profligate and abandoned. But an injurious effect of the same nature is often produced, though in an inferior degree, when the conduct of the wicked is justified, or a vicious action is made the subject of boasting or applause. Where any advantages of wealth or station have been gained, or pleasures have been enjoyed, at the manifest expense of moral principle, and are not frankly condemned; or where qualities of a decidedly vicious character, are passed slightly over, or represented as innocent or commendable;—there, confusion and inconsistency are introduced into the moral judgments of others; their views of duty are lowered, their sense of the obligation and worth of high moral character is lessened or destroyed. We are bound, not only to form correct and elevated conceptions of the obligations and duties of religion, but to render them manifest in our conversation, as well as our conduct, and to strive to purify and elevate the views of others. So far as example and human opinion have an influence, it is as important that vice should be discountenanced and reprobated,

as that virtue and holiness should be respected and approved. To attribute bad motives, where good ones may have operated, or to exaggerate the guilt of what is merely foolish or imprudent, is always forbidden; but it seems to be a duty equally great, decidedly and firmly to censure, where wickedness is manifest, and never to suffer the station, or wealth, or success of the offender, to confuse or to qualify the feelings, which we should experience or express against the vice itself.

We cause others to offend, whenever by conversation we stimulate their passions, exasperate their tempers, or influence their vicious feelings; and yet more, when by loose remarks, allusions, or descriptions, we taint the purity of their minds, and fill their imaginations with images of grossness or sensuality. From a tainted imagination, or inflamed passions, the step is short and easy to deeds of violence and crime. And better had that tongue, which was given to offer praise to God, and to carry counsel and comfort to men, have been for ever silent as the grave, than become the willing organ of pollution.

Satire and ridicule are also great sources of the offences of men. There are few who have firmness enough to stand before them; and many a timid mind has been made ashamed of its religious principles, its conscientious scruples, and its devotional feelings; and many a diffident and retiring spirit has been turned from the plainest path of duty, and forced into errors or vices, from

which it once recoiled with fear and sadness, by the sarcasms and sneers of the corrupt. To such, how applicable are the words of our Saviour; "whosoever shall cause one of these little ones which believe in me to offend, it were better for him that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."

I have dwelt the longer on the causes of offence which arise from conversation, because here we are generally most unguarded and forgetful, though the injury thus done may be greatest. I pass to remark,

3. In the third place, that by our conduct, we often give occasion to others to sin. Where others are dependent on us, we often have an entire influence on much of their conduct. Every one will readily see, that when services are enjoined on them, which are contrary to morality and religion, or when they are employed as the instruments of our wickedness, their guilt rests on ourselves. But it is not always considered, that by wilfully leading others into temptations, which without us they would have escaped, urging them by our solicitation, furnishing them with opportunity, confirming them by our countenance, or granting them assistance in sinful actions which without our agency they would not have committed, we become responsible for their conduct, and incur an equal share of criminality.

But the most frequent way, in which our conduct causes others to offend, is through the

influence of example. Men generally do not fear to tread where others have gone before them. Our conduct will excite wishes of imitation in others, which would otherwise never have been felt; will lessen their conviction of the importance of duties, which they see us willing to neglect; or embolden them in their transgression of laws, which they find us often or habitually violating. And the more elevated the station in which men are placed, the stronger the affection and confidence with which they are regarded, and the higher the character they have borne for integrity and piety, the more disastrous is the influence of example, when in any case it is given to the cause of irreligion or sin.

St Paul, in several passages, urges on his converts, the importance of having a charitable regard to the scruples and prejudices of others, in things which are in themselves indifferent. While we follow the dictates of our own consciences, others must follow theirs; and we shall cause others to offend, whenever we cause them to act against their conscience, however innocent the act may appear to ourselves. I know, said the Apostle, in writing to Jewish converts, that "nothing is unclean in itself, but if a man esteem any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil to him who eateth so as to cause offence; and he who doubteth, is condemned if he eat, because he eateth without being convinced that it is lawful. Wherefore if meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no

flesh while the world standeth," adds the benevolent Apostle, "lest I make my brother to offend, and destroy him for whom Christ died." *

It is well for us, if we can catch something of this benevolent spirit, and impose on ourselves those trifling restraints, and practise that charitable caution, in respect to many things that we deem harmless, which shall prevent us from wounding the consciences of others, or causing them to fall. Happy is he who brings no condemnation on himself, in that which he alloweth.

To conclude—"No man liveth to himself." Those, whom God has placed around us, are not to be considered as merely inhabitants with us of our common earth, and that there our interest in them is to end;—but to be viewed as beings on whose welfare and improvement we are designed to exert a continued and an important influence. Let us strive, then, to fulfil this obligation, and by our conversation and our actions, to confirm the faith, increase the knowledge, strengthen the principles, and animate the religious feelings of others. We may thus reclaim many from the error of their ways, and save their souls from death; and we certainly shall aid many in their preparation for the kingdom of heaven.

* Rom. xiv. 1. Cor. viii. x.

SERMON XI.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

EPHESIANS VI. 4.

FATHERS, PROVOKE NOT YOUR CHILDREN TO WRATH, BUT BRING THEM UP IN THE NURTURE AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD.

THE general necessity of the Religious Education of children is acknowledged by all; but it is perhaps impossible that its actual importance should be fully realized and adequately felt. The foundation of the moral character is most often laid in the years of childhood; and the progress of life very frequently does little more than develope and fix the principles, harden the habits, and give permanence to the feelings, which were either formed by deliberate care, or caught by accidental influences, during the period of youthful susceptibility. The world is full of temptations, through which, in various measures, all are destined to pass; and nothing can protect the young adventurer amidst the perils and exposures of life, but the early establishment of sound and deep rooted religious principles.

Parents are not always sufficiently sensible, that it is almost entirely to themselves that children must look for instruction in religious truth, and the culture of religious habits. Many satisfy themselves with imagining, that sufficient provision is made for the religious education of their children, in their daily schools, and in the weekly instructions of the pulpit. Whereas in some schools, religious instruction is entirely neglected; in others it is given with so much looseness, as to be entirely vain; in few is it made a distinct, serious object of interest and attention; and in almost all, from the very nature and design of the establishments, it can fill but a subordinate and occasional place, in the course of study. Even where a more than usual attention is paid to it, it can be hardly made sufficiently particular, or be illustrated so variously, and at so great length, as to become interesting and impressive; or be brought home to the peculiar circumstances, character and dangers of every child. Besides that the excitement and regulation of religious feeling is a very important part of a well conducted religious education: and the culture of the feelings, the education of the heart, is not the work of a school, but of domestic care and duty.

The instructions of the pulpit are insufficient, because, in general, the subjects discussed must be above their comprehension, the style not sufficiently simple, and the applications not sufficiently direct and particular, to be completely under-

stood and felt by children. The services of public worship have indeed a very important influence on their minds and hearts; but it is not so much by means of any particular truths which they receive, as by the seriousness of feeling it causes, and by the general conviction it leaves upon them of their relation to an unseen and exalted Being, to whom homage and obedience are owed, and to whom they are responsible for their conduct. The benefit of public worship is thus felt more in preparing their minds for subsequent instruction at home, than in the knowledge which they can acquire of particular obligations and duties. It comes powerfully in aid of domestic instruction, but cannot be any adequate substitute for it.

There is this great evil too, arising from parents giving no farther attention to the religious instruction of their children than is furnished by the teachings of the sanctuary, that the effect of other instructions is extremely impaired; they are soon forgotten or disregarded; for children will think that to be of small importance, concerning which their parents are careless and unconcerned. They must be led to perceive, that their parents are sincerely and deeply interested in their religious improvement. There is in the parental relation, every thing that can give efficacy to instruction. The reverence, the unreserved confidence, the almost exclusive affection, with which parents are regarded, dispose every child to listen with more atten-

tion and more strong and implicit belief to all their teachings, than any other instructer can secure. They best know the peculiar tempers of their children, and are most acquainted with the surest modes of impressing and influencing their minds and feelings. Opportunities are continually furnished to them in the confidence and affection of domestic intercourse, which can occur to none but themselves; while the inexpressible interest which a parent feels, will give a tenderness and force to their precepts and their appeals, which can spring from no other source.

If we inquire into the obstacles which most frequently prevent parents from attending to the religious education of their offspring, we shall find them sometimes to arise from Vanity, which is more desirous of training children in showy accomplishments, than in the solid qualities of a virtuous character; of rendering them graceful and polished in manners, and fascinating in worldly accomplishments, than of giving them the less imposing graces of seriousness, humility, and purity, or kindling in their uncorrupted bosoms, the living and sanctifying spirit of silent and unobtrusive piety.—We see another great obstacle in the indolence of parents. They are unwilling to burden themselves with the care of the religious culture of their children, and surrender it as a heavy task to the attention of others. They turn from the pain of watching for the best opportunities of giving instruction, and from the effort of adapting their counsels to the weak-

ness and simplicity of the youthful intellect. They will appoint religious lessons to be committed to the memory, but take not sufficient pains that they be well understood, impressed by frequent conversation, or enforced on their hearts and consciences by particular application and direct appeals. That children should be well instructed in religion, demands the careful improvement of short but often repeated occasions of enlightening and impressing their minds, and a continual care that right impressions alone should be received. And all this requires a patience, industry, and perseverance, which parents are often reluctant to give.—But the greatest obstacle of all is found in their want of a sufficiently serious sense of the importance of religious education. It is indeed regarded as very desirable, as valuable, as in fact necessary: but many parents do not sufficiently feel, that on it are dependent not only the virtue, honor, usefulness, happiness of their children in this world, but their everlasting welfare in the world to come. Were this conviction adequately realized, what parent could be careless, remiss, or impatient?

Without urging further the importance of religious education, I now wish to offer some remarks on the best methods of conducting it. The observations I shall make, must necessarily be general and imperfect; but they may furnish you with hints for your own reflection. They will relate, first, to the general manner of giving instruction, secondly, to its objects, thirdly, to the opportunities for dispensing it.

1. The very design and nature of religion teaches us, how early in life it should be made a deliberate object of education. Religion is not to be taught as a science, or propounded as a subject of speculative interest; if it were so, it might safely be left till the mind should be matured by age, reading, and experience. It is to be the former of character, and the guide of life; to be interwoven inseparably with all our sentiments; to direct and establish all our modes of thinking and feeling; to form our dispositions, and regulate our habits. It is evident, then, that its influence should be made to operate on a child as early as is possible; that religious sentiments should be instilled, as soon as they are capable of forming any idea of its subjects. The leading dispositions are determined at a very early age, oftentimes before parents have paid any attention to the religious character. And the feelings and habits are exposed to many evil biases and disastrous influences, which we can hardly begin too early to counteract.

In religious, as in scientific education, it is necessary to follow nature in her gradual developement of the mind and heart; and to adapt instruction to those powers, which are soonest expanded and brought into exercise. Children are not capable of much reasoning. The intellect is weak; but the imagination and the memory are susceptible and retentive, and the feelings of the heart can be addressed and influenced in the first years of life. It is probable that

religious instruction would be more effectually given, were the imagination of children more addressed than it usually is. They should be taught, as our Saviour taught his ignorant disciples, not only by plain, simple, and concise precepts, but also by pointing out examples, by various illustrations, by reference to the objects around them, and by appeals to experience, or to passing events. Religious truths are thus better apprehended and longer remembered, and their practical application is seen. The language in which they are conveyed, cannot be too simple; and they are always better understood and more interesting, when made the subject of conversation in which the child bears a part, than when we attempt to impress them by more formal modes of instruction.

It would seem almost needless to remark on the importance of ever presenting to the minds of children, those views of religion which they can realize and feel. Moral precepts and rules they can always sufficiently comprehend; but it is only the most simple views of the character and providence of God, and the mediation of his Son and the future world, of which children are able to form any definite or useful conceptions. It is not merely useless, but it often has a very injurious effect, to crowd the memory with dark and mysterious doctrines, expressed in technical phraseology, to which they can attach no definite ideas. The whole subject of religion is thus made to appear in an unintelli-

gible light, is supposed to consist in mystery, and to be concerned only about abstract and disputable points of faith. When children are compelled to commit long and incomprehensible creeds or catechisms to memory, without understanding or feeling any part of them, there is great danger lest associations of weariness, disgust and aversion, should be inseparably connected with all thoughts of religion itself. They will thus be prevented from ever after attending to the subject with care and interest. Much indeed must necessarily be entrusted to the memory; but it is extremely desirable that it be furnished, less with speculative and abstruse opinions, than with just principles and rules of conduct, with elevated religious sentiments, and with those impressive and affecting views of the character and government of God, which should be the excitement and support of pious affections. It seems, indeed, less important that children should receive correct views of very many points of religion, than that they should have correct feelings on religious subjects. No mistake is greater than that of imagining that religion, like a science, is to be addressed to the intellect and the memory alone. The heart, the moral taste, the conscience, are most to be addressed; and so far as these are not enlightened, directed, and hallowed by their influence, religious truths are fastened on the memory in vain.

It is of extreme importance, that the minds of children should be preserved from attaching

ideas of severity, weariness, and gloom to the subject of religion. The greatest care should be taken to present it in the light most interesting and attractive. The spirit of childhood is gay, lively, and happy; and whatever violently opposes this, will excite aversion. They should be made to regard religion, as the foundation of all that is worthy and happy in life. The heart and affections must be engaged in its favor; and children will ever recur with interest to a subject, by which feeling is excited. Where religious instruction is felt by the parent to be a task, which ought, however reluctantly, to be discharged, and where it is consequently dispensed in a negligent, hurried, and superficial manner, with little care to make it intelligible to the understanding, or affecting to the heart; it will necessarily be regarded by the pupil as a useless burthen, from which he rejoices to escape. Where religion is represented in a light only of solemn restraints; where it is continually brought in to check or subdue the innocent gaiety of childish feeling; where it is taught only by long formal lectures, with sad austerity of countenance, and enforced not by motives of affection, but by commands, and threatenings, and terrors, it is not wonderful, that an unconquerable prejudice against it, is fixed for ever on the mind. Experience often proves the disastrous consequences of such a mode of instruction; for we frequently find those who were subjected to it in childhood, going through life either in a hardened religious indifference, or in open habits of profligacy.

2. With regard to the Objects of religious instruction, it is first to be remarked, that as religion has a primary reference to the relation between man and his Maker, children should early be taught to form worthy, impressive, and interesting conceptions of the character and government of God. It should be a principal object to impress them peculiarly with views of those perfections which have the best effect on the heart. It is true, that the "*fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" but it is not a slavish and depressing dread, but a filial and affectionate reverence of God. And it should be an object of great care, that children ever think of him with deep reverence, and that his name never be mentioned with profaneness or levity.

But there is a great error often committed on this point. Many parents are accustomed to single out the holiness and justice of God, as the leading features in his character, and are peculiarly desirous to impress their children with deep convictions of his hatred of sin, and his power to punish. It is almost impossible for children to form just conceptions of the holiness of God. It is the final result, the complete union of all his other perfections. The idea of perfect holiness is too much compounded of other ideas, too comprehensive in its import, to be adequately and worthily understood by them. And the manner, in which it is enforced on their minds, too often produces a secret and depressing apprehension, rather than an affectionate

awe; and God is regarded as a being, whom it is necessary to conciliate, but impossible to love. By representing the manner in which an affectionate parent is offended, when children do wrong, they may perhaps form the most intelligible and correct conception of the divine hatred against sin. Children should be taught to feel the personal interest, with which God ever regards them. And this is best done, by inculcating upon them that all they are, and all they enjoy, is derived from his goodness. When their hearts are expanded with joy, let their thoughts be directed to that Being, who gives all the means of their happiness. Let them be taught to see the merciful care of God, in all the provisions he has made for their protection and comfort, in the parents whom they love, in the pleasures which they share, in the advantages which they enjoy. Let them be taught to see his beneficence clearly displayed in the lower orders of the animated creation, and in all that animates and delights in the grandeur and beauty of nature. When they are in any seeming danger, when terrors of the thunder move their apprehension, tell them of His presence, who ever encircles and protects his children. Let these impressions be given them, and you lay the best foundation for the affections of piety; you accustom them to associate the thoughts of constant care and goodness, security and happiness, with the remembrance of God; you awaken those feelings of interest

and love towards their unseen Benefactor, which render them desirous of pleasing him, and make his service delightful.

The character of our Saviour may be made as intelligible and interesting to the mind of a child, as that of an absent earthly friend. The history of his life is as easily comprehended as the incidents of a tale; and his parables are often so simple, affectionate and touching, that they may be impressed upon children with great effect.

By care, by simplicity of instruction, and by addressing the imagination, many impressive views of a future state, may be fixed in the minds of children, and heaven be rendered an object of interest and of desire. If a parent or a friend has ever been taken from them, they may be taught, that if they are virtuous, they will hereafter meet them again. If any views of the character of God, or of our Saviour, touch them, in heaven they will see them as they are. And the representations of heaven which the Scriptures address to our imaginations, the assembly of angels, the music of golden harps, and the glories of the city of God, may be deeply impressed on the minds of children. True, they will form but low and confused conceptions of a better world; but their views of it will be corrected by age: while the habit of thinking of it with interest, of making it the subject of contemplation, and of acting with reference to it, will remain to influence and

purify the feelings, and be a powerful motive to religious conduct.

It is important that children should early be made acquainted with the Scriptures. Christianity rests upon facts; the knowledge of its history is necessary, both that faith in its authority may be well grounded, and that its instructions may be properly apprehended. The histories of the Scriptures are so plain, that they can easily be understood; and the events which they record are so wonderful, as ever to excite curiosity and arrest attention. By a proper care in selecting passages for reading, they may be rendered extremely interesting to children; and there is no part even of their history, which does not convey, in a manner the most impressive, some important moral instruction.

The Scriptures are ever to be made to them the great source of all moral rules and principles, for the direction of their conduct. Most parents exhort their children, in general terms to be virtuous and holy; but few are sufficiently careful to explain with particularity, in what virtue and holiness consist; what are the particular dispositions, habits, actions, which are required or forbidden. The instruction of children is often greatly defective, from the custom, which is very prevalent, of teaching the ten commandments, as a complete system of moral duties. Whereas, they in fact contain a very small part of the duty of a Christian. They are little more than prohibitions of the grosser vices; they con-

tain no rules of exalted virtue; they enjoin almost nothing of the most important christian graces; they entirely omit those leading dispositions of christian character, humility, meekness, patience, gentleness, forgiveness of injuries, love of enemies, and the fervent and practical love of our neighbor. They ought indeed to be taught, because the prohibitions are so important, so concise, and so authoritative; but they should not be represented as comprising the whole of christian duty. The natural effect of thus representing the subject is, that those who are free from the scandalous vices there reprobated, are apt to imagine that no more is demanded of them, and that they are exemplary in all that is required. The commandments should be taken in connexion with the expositions of duty given by our Lord in the sermon on the mount, and the various precepts and rules of conduct, with which his own instructions and the writings of the apostles are filled. The requirements of the gospel should continually be held up, as the standard of moral duty; and peculiar care should be given, to inculcate on children those meek, and lowly, and enduring virtues, which are peculiarly the characteristics of the christian system.

But instruction in moral rules, is of little importance, unless they be also taught to apply them continually to practice. They should ever be guarded from supposing, that all which concerns them in religion is ended, when the short season

of serious instruction is past. They should be led to consider, that religion is not to be separated from the conduct of life; that the instructions they receive, are to be the principles and rules by which their dispositions are to be tried, and their ordinary conduct governed.

Prayer is one of the duties most frequently and most solemnly enjoined, and it is the greatest means of advancement in the christian life. Most parents teach their children to repeat prayers; but perhaps sufficient attention is not generally given, to make them comprehend the nature of the duty, and to accustom them to pray with sincerity and reverence. It is too often no more than a rapid recitation of a form of words. Children should be made to understand and to feel the petitions they would offer, and the thanksgivings they would express. For this purpose, prayers must be very short and simple; and it would be an important advantage, if children were induced, as soon as they are capable of doing it, to frame short petitions, and to express their pious feelings and desires in their own language. Their prayers in this way would indeed be more imperfect, but they would be more sincere; and we know that the feeblest aspirations of a little child, will ever rise acceptably to that merciful Being, before whom the highest angels bow and adore.

3. It was my intention to have offered some remarks on the best opportunities and means of giving religious instruction; but time will

now permit me only briefly to remark on two points.

The habit of family devotion is of great advantage, in cultivating the religious character of children. Good impressions are thus continually given and renewed, and feelings of seriousness and piety excited and strengthened. The truths and duties of religion are thus kept continually before the mind. And where no forms of religion are statedly observed, and no example of devotion is exhibited, and nothing is seen in parents of external expressions of homage to God; there is danger lest children should think them unimportant and needless, and the influence of parental instructions be weakened or destroyed.

The manner in which the Lord's day is regarded, has a great effect on the religious habits of children. Great caution is indeed necessary, that Sunday should never be made to them a day of heaviness, fatigue, and gloom; since the manner in which religion itself is regarded, is greatly influenced by the feelings with which the return of this day is attended. And if the season which is peculiarly devoted to religious thoughts and exercises, is a season of weary restraints, the services of religion will wear an aspect of austerity and sadness. But Sunday should ever be observed as a day of rest from the labors of ordinary business, and the gaiety of ordinary amusement; a day, which a holier spirit than that of this world hallows and glad-

dens; a day of cheerfulness, and of religious joy. Where this is the case, its return will be anticipated by children with interest, and the exercises to which it calls them, be remembered with delight.

It is a salutary practice of religious families to devote some portion of Sunday, when its public services are ended, to the deliberate instruction of children. And it is a practice, the advantages of which, when prudently observed, cannot be too highly estimated. At no time are the mind and the heart of a parent more prepared for the duty; and at no time can instructions be given under a juster sense of their importance, or with a spirit of more serious and affectionate tenderness. By a proper care, these seasons of religious counsel and intercourse may be made extremely interesting. Very many who have risen to a life of exemplary piety, are able, in looking back on the years of childhood, to find in the serious impressions which were made, the feelings which were called forth, and the affectionate counsels which were given, in these consecrated hours, the most powerful causes of the culture and gradual advancement of their religious characters.

SERMON XII.

RESIGNATION

JAMES IV. 7.

SUBMIT YOURSELVES THEREFORE UNTO GOD.

THERE is no view in which Christianity appears more interesting, than in its adaptation to a state of frequent disappointment and affliction. There is in it nothing of proud and cold indifference. It calls us not to annihilate our feelings, but only to regulate them; and it meets them, when wounded, with healing and consolation. We are nowhere taught that grief is forbidden, or that sorrow is criminal. Insensibility is never represented as a virtue; tears were not given us never to be shed; friends were not bestowed to be received without affection or be lost without regret. We are not either ungrateful or reprehensible because we mourn when the hand of God is upon us. The character of Jesus was not stained when he wept over the tomb of him whom he loved; and like him, we may pray that, if it be possible,

the cup of suffering may pass from us, if we can add like him, "Not my will but thine be done." This is the temper which Christianity enjoins, and which in affliction we ought to maintain: neither to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor to faint in despair under his rebuke;—but to look up to God, though it may be with a broken heart, yet with feelings of devout submission, and humble confidence and hope.

Do you ask why we ought in suffering to cherish such a temper?

1. Consider, in the first place, the character and providence of God, and you will see the reasonableness of a filial resignation. To whom are we exhorted to be submissive? Not to a Being whose character we know not, whose goodness we may doubt, or whose mercy we have never experienced; but to the Creator and Father of all. Look abroad on his works, and learn in what character he manifests himself to his creatures. Observe with what wisdom he has contrived this world for our habitation, how salutary are all its laws, and how mercifully he has adorned it with beauty, and filled it with usefulness and enjoyment. Can you believe, that He, who has expended so much wisdom and goodness on his world around us, will inflict a needless suffering on his children who inhabit it? Remember, too, the care and mercy he has shown you all your life long. Consider under what favorable circumstances he first brought

you into being; how long he has watched over your erring steps, and preserved you from numberless dangers; how many friends he has raised up to bless you; how kindly he has provided for the little wants of every returning day; and with what unceasing munificence he has showered on you his blessings each moment of life. Can you think that a Being, who has done so much, will now wantonly desert you? Will he, who has in all your past life cared so much for your happiness, now rejoice to witness your distress? Can a woman forget her infant child? How much less will your Father in heaven ever forget to be gracious to his feeble and dependent offspring. Did we realize, as we ought, the character of the All-merciful;—were we accustomed, as we ought, to recognize his agency in the events of our lives, and to trace the stream of its gifts to him; did not a secret and distrustful incredulity mingle with our firmest belief of his wisdom and goodness; we should be ready, in the darkest hours of our calamity, to say with humble resignation, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

In connexion with the goodness of God, consider our own ignorance, and it will further teach you the reasonableness of resignation. God's providence is too vast, his designs too complicated and extensive, for our minds to embrace them. Even the whole of this world exhibits but the beginnings of the stupendous scheme of his government. And how little of

its designs and operations, even in this world, can we comprehend! We can discern only single, separate steps in the mighty march of his providence, and can hardly trace even the immediate ends which any particular dispensation is designed to promote. When the child, whose powers are fast unfolding to promise, is suddenly smitten down, and the aged are left silently and gradually to decay; when one is called from the world in the midst of usefulness, and another is suffered to pine slowly away, dead to enjoyment and useless in the world; when the whole life of one is peaceful and gay, and another toils through a lengthened pilgrimage of pain, sickness, and grief;—we see not the reasons of these dispensations, but we know that in God's world nothing happens by chance; that health and joy, pain and disease, are his ministers, and that life and death wait upon his word. We know that he has no interest to seek, separate from the happiness of his children. We know that his dispensations are mysterious, not to amaze, but to bless us; and that, as far as he enables us to comprehend his purposes, all are ordered in benignity. Ought we not then to trust, that where our dim sight cannot reach, yet there also, mercy dwells; and that his hand, though to us it be wrapt in clouds, and inscrutable in its appointments, is yet guiding the course of events with equally wise and compassionate goodness?

There is another view of the government of

God, which should sooth and console us. "He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust." He looks upon thee, Christian, with love, and will bring thee to no trial which he gives not strength to bear. Amidst all thy distress he will never forsake thee, if thou forsake not him. Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee; hope thou in God, and he will yet deliver thee from these troubles. Though now, like the solitary patriarch amid the waters of the deluge, all above thee be clouds and storms, and all around be dreariness and desolation, there is an eye which watches and an arm which guides and protects thee, and when the waters of sorrow have subsided, a holier and happier world will be thy recompense and rest.

There are often peculiar consolations in seasons of mourning, in the thought of God's universal providence. Friends may be far from us, but they cannot be far from Him. They cannot go where his presence does not encompass, and his providence watch over them. What though they be buried in the waves; yet God was in the storm which swept them away. What though they sink in a land of strangers; yet there God watched over them with more than human tenderness. Though they leave this world, they are yet in his universe; and in every unknown scene of their existence they are in the hands of his infinite wisdom and mercy.

2. In our afflictions themselves we may find many reasons for resignation. We are taught

in the gospel to consider our present state as simply preparatory, as designed simply to prove, discipline and educate us for a higher and nobler world. This view throws a peculiar and consoling light on all the dispensations of God's providence, and teaches us to regard them, not as tokens of wrath, but as means of improvement and expressions of mercy. We are sometimes apt to wonder at the different kinds and degrees of trial which are apportioned to different individuals. But from our own intercourse with men we may learn, that different characters, in order to their improvement, require different treatment. Their peculiarities of feeling and temper, and their different degrees of moral culture, render a great diversity necessary in their several circumstances of trial. The same dispensation which would render one worse, will make another better. Affliction, while it would render one impatient or morose, or bow him in despair to the dust, will create in another a temper of mildness, humility, and patient resignation. Success, while it awakens one heart to charity and gratitude, turns another to hardness, and fills it with arrogance and pride. What parent does not know how different is the mode of conduct necessary towards his children of different dispositions? Does not God, in like manner, know the dispensations most needed by the individuals of his human family, and will he not order all in a wise reference to their various characters? We know not our own wants, nor

can we foresee the influence which any particular dispensation of providence would have upon us. Let us then submit ourselves unto Him "who is higher than we," in the assurance that he best knows what we need, and will cause all things, if we trust in him, to work for our final good.

Again. We ourselves need discipline of various kinds, and to be led through mingled scenes of sorrow and joy. Were life only a season of suffering, the spirit would be broken, and our confidence in God's goodness be shaken or destroyed; and were all our lot successful, we might soon become selfish, negligent, and presumptuous. Besides, the principles and feelings of the Christian need to be proved and exercised in various ways, to be tested in their sincerity by different situations, and to be made to influence the conduct under different circumstances. Who could have confidence in his own integrity, were it never put to the proof? And it is more than any thing, the trials of danger and suffering, which give firmness, vigor, and effectiveness to the Christian character. There are, also, many important truths which are principally taught us, and many virtues which we can only learn in the school of affliction. We need suffering to correct our false views of the world, to teach us its insufficiency, and the need of better and more enduring objects on which to rest our hopes. It is suffering which makes us realize our own weakness, the feeble tenure

of our blessings, and our entire dependence on God alone. We need sorrow to correct our thoughtlessness, and to turn levity into seriousness; to tame the violence of our passions, and render temptation weak; to subdue the impatience of desire, and the arrogance of pride. It is seasons of suffering which give occasion to the exercise of patience and fortitude, of humble resignation and trust in God. Yet virtues like these are among the most important graces of the christian character. Ought we not, then, to be resigned to those dispensations, by which God designs to promote and nourish them?

Besides, the heart of man, like the odorous spices of the east, needs to be bruised before its best essence is extracted. There is a mild gentleness, a peculiar and pensive tenderness given by sorrow to the feelings, which nothing else can give. We then learn our dependence on the kindness of others, and begin to regard them with a new sense of gratitude and interest. When suffering presses on us, all sternness of character must melt away, and the sympathies, which in the season of prosperity may be cold and exclusive, are extended to every being who comforts us, and to every one who mourns. No one has ever endeavored to improve by suffering, but has found his character softened and made better. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect by sufferings; shall we then repine when, by the same means, God is designing t promote our improvement? When you take into

view the whole of your existence; when you consider your present state as simply preparatory, and designed only to discipline and form your character; and thus perceive the beneficial purposes of suffering; you cannot think that your light afflictions are indeed evils, but blessings; and could you discern all the remote influences they are designed to exert, you would doubtless choose that the hand of God should inflict them upon you.

3. Beside these "moral influences of adversity," there are many considerations connected with our afflictions themselves, which should teach us the reasonableness of resignation, if not of thankfulness. Heavy as our burden of sorrow may be, it is not so heavy as God might have laid upon us. Perhaps he has visited you with severe and painful sickness; but has he not surrounded you with many circumstances of alleviation and ease? Perhaps he has taken from you a father or a wife; but has he not left children to comfort you? If he has bereaved you of a beloved child, are there no friends remaining on whom you may rest your affections and hopes? Or if he has burst asunder all the ties of earthly kindred, yet has he not placed you in society where others will rejoice to protect and sustain you. And how much do you owe him for revealing to you a Father in heaven, in whose compassionate and watchful care you may cheerfully confide! There is no state so dark, that some beams of mercy do not enlight-

en it. There is no condition so desolate, that some blessings might not yet be taken away. The eye that is dimmed with grief sees indeed all its sorrows magnified, and its blessings obscured; but that state is rare, in which our calamities, numerous as they may be, are not surpassed in number by the mercies which God continues. Ought all our remaining comforts to be overlooked, when some have been taken away? Or is it unreasonable to be resigned to that God of compassion, who in the midst of judgment remembers us in mercy?

When we think of the peculiar circumstances under which afflictions are sent upon us, we may often find in them reasons for resignation. When afflicted, can you not look back on your past life, and remember a time when your present suffering would have come with double severity, and found you in a state far less fitted to sustain the blow? Was there not kindness then in thus delaying your affliction until you had gained strength to bear it? Can you not even discern some circumstances, which seem almost expressly introduced to alleviate its severity? How often may we find in them a preparation or relief to mourning! In one case, we are prepared for bereavement by distant separation from a friend, which has silently been loosening the ties which bound us together;—in another, by being called to watch over the gradual progress of his decay. Here we are comforted by seeing that their longer continuance in life

would evidently be only continuance of suffering; and who can tell the consolations which sooth us, when we see those whom we love, leaving this world in composure and hope, and can follow them with the eye of assurance to the rewards of a better world. We may grieve when the amiable and holy are taken away; but we should remember, too, that the graces, which rendered them most dear to us, made them also more ready to depart. We know not what sorrows might have fallen on them, had not God taken them from the world. Perhaps some severe trial was near, under which their virtue would have sunk; or some fearful distress was impending, which would have turned their life into wo. There is one who saw the approaching evil; and shall we repine, because He, in mercy, has delivered them from its power?

There is another consideration which surely ought to render us resigned under every species of affliction which God is pleased to appoint. The stroke of Providence is ever lighter than our sins, and our afflictions are far less than we deserve. Think for a moment of your obligations to God; how long his forbearance has continued, how incessantly his goodness has been renewed, and how constant and imperative the calls to universal and cheerful obedience. Think too of your deficiences, neglects, and sins. Remember the carelessness of your regard, and the poverty and imperfection of your best services; and number if you can, the duties you have

neglected, and the deeds of transgression you have done. Do you not then wonder that God has so long spared you the suffering you have merited? Do you not wonder at the kindness, which now afflicts you with so much pity and tenderness? which so long continued to you the blessing for whose loss you mourn? And will you not be resigned, when at last he takes it away?

In the last place, we should consider, that heavy as our sorrows now may be, they cannot be of long duration. We now feel that our joys should not rise high, because they are short and uncertain; nor should our afflictions oppress us too heavily, for they will soon trouble us no more. In the chambers of death there is repose, though we find it no longer in life. How short is the race which remains for us to run! A few more suns only will shine upon us, and then we shall lie low, and be at rest. Why then should we be disquieted and anxious? Why should we suffer our light afflictions to turn our few days into sadness, and to unfit us for that active service of God, which alone can prepare us to leave this world in peace? Let us rather strive to submit ourselves unto God, and to resign with cheerful hope, all our concerns to him. Let us turn our thoughts from our sorrows to our duties, and strive by a faithful and zealous obedience, to gain that favor which no changes of life can take away, and to prepare for that world which trial, sin, and sorrow never enter.

SERMON XIII.

JUDGING OF CHARACTERS BY THE MANNER OF DEATH.

NUMBERS XXIII. 10.

LET ME DIE THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND LET MY LAST END BE LIKE HIS.

THE wish expressed in these words there is no one who does not feel. However carelessly a man is willing to live, he is desirous of dying in peace, disturbed by no remembrances of guilt, or fears of retribution, and gladdened by those anticipations of felicity, which the gospel inspires in the hearts it has sanctified.

It is a common thing to judge concerning the religious character and future prospects of men by the manner in which they appear during their last hours; and there are few circumstances which have tended more than this to fix in the minds of men mistaken views of the nature of religion, and of its requirements. They see those whose lives they cannot consider as marked by any exemplariness of virtue or piety,—in whose characters, when in health, there appeared little either of seriousness or devotion,—whom, though

stained with no gross vices, they would never have considered religious men,—dying without agitation, with apparent submission, with no deep sorrow for the past, or anxiety for the future. This calmness is considered of itself as a complete evidence that the departed were sufficiently prepared for death, and are no doubt happy in heaven. The consequence is, that men imagine that if their own characters and lives are no worse than theirs, they are perfectly safe;—that nothing more is necessary than freedom from notorious vices and general regularity of outward conduct;—and that to aim at any greater degree of christian purity or piety is quite superfluous and unnecessary. It is a very true remark, "that nothing is more suspicious than what is called a happy death, where there has neither been religion in the life, nor humility in its close; when its course has been without piety, and its termination without repentance." *

The evil of judging the religious characters and final state of men by their last hours is more strikingly evident in another case. We see men, whose lives have been habitually vicious or negligent, in the last hours of death seized for a time with great horror, and, after a short season of distress, with as great extasies of joy. This is thought to be conversion. The patient is supposed to pass in an instant from darkness into marvellous light; and those who see it often go away, and fancy they may go

* H. More's Practical Piety.

on without concern in an irreligious course, and when death is near, by passing through a similar process, be in a few hours prepared for heaven. Repentance, instead of being a filial contrition, a compunction of heart, terminating in a thorough change of character, is thought to be only an agony of fear and sorrow; faith, to be only a persuasion, produced they know not how, that their sins are pardoned and that they have an interest in Christ. The necessity of sound and practical religion, of universal obedience to God's will, in order to his acceptance, is thus unregarded and unfelt.

In the present discourse, I wish to present some views, which may illustrate the impossibility of forming any well grounded opinion on the characters or probable condition of men, merely from the manner in which they die; and then to mention some of those dispositions which ought peculiarly to be exercised at the close of life.

You will see the impossibility of deciding on the characters or prospects of men by their last hours alone, by considering some of the many circumstances, which may cause persons to leave the world, either with calmness or with expressions of hope and joy, when in fact they are unprepared for death.

Very many go out of the world before they are sensible of the power of their disease, and the extent of their danger. They do not think that they are soon to die; they are looking for-

ward, not to that unseen world now so near, but to the anticipated scenes of business or enjoyment on which they are never again to enter. Some sudden change takes place, and they sink unexpectedly and at once. That they should appear calm and tranquil when apprehending no evil, is not wonderful; nor is it in the slightest degree an evidence of preparation for their departure.

Where the disease which terminates life is violent and rapid, the mind sinks under its power; the sufferer is unable, distinctly and for any length of time, to realize his own situation; he has, and can have, no clear perception of approaching dissolution and its awful consequences. Here, the person is calm and composed in mind, simply because all his faculties are weakened and obscured. Tranquillity in such a case, and these are the cases which most frequently occur, is no evidence of a confirmed christian character.

Again—When in the last sickness the powers of the mind are continued, persons may die with composure in consequence of great and wilful ignorance of what the gospel really requires. Their views of its demands in respect to holiness of character and life, are so loose and inadequate, their conceptions of God's mercy so confused and inconsistent, their self-deception so great, that they go out of life without apprehension, and with an unjustifiable reliance on God's goodness, fancying themselves

meet for heaven; when, if you compare their characters with the demands of the gospel, charity itself is compelled to fear that they may be totally deficient. Those who are often called to converse with the sick and the dying, have frequent cause to be astonished at the unauthorized and incoherent sentiments, entertained and expressed by them of the nature and leading principles of the gospel, and of what it requires as indispensable for their final acceptance with God.

The apparent calmness with which many meet death, is the result of natural disposition. There is in some, great firmness and fortitude of temper, which can look on danger without trembling. A resolute determination to manifest no weakness or apprehension, bears them up, and they go downward with a bold step to the regions of darkness and the shadow of death. The thoughtless and light minded, may, even at this awful hour, exclude serious reflection from their minds, turn off their attention from every prospect of solemnity, check the counsels of friends, and trifle on the borders of the grave. You surely can attribute nothing of all this to the influence of religious principles and hopes.

In the minds of some, is a secret, if not settled and avowed, unbelief. Men may, for they have done it, persuade themselves that there is no future state, and that all retribution is folly and a dream. Where these views are deeply rooted, they have no fear nor hope of hereafter,

and go to lie down, with the brute of the earth, in eternal silence and insensibility. In other instances, where some belief of a future state is maintained by persons of irreligious lives, they imagine that hereafter God will, to none of his creatures, be strict to mark iniquity, but will gather all, the clean and the unclean together, into one fold of heavenly blessedness. They have no fear of punishment, for they have persuaded themselves that there will be none; and thus, though the scriptures most solemnly assure them, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; though they declare, in most explicit and uniform language, that the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction; a secret incredulity of all this blinds their minds, and they die, cheated with the false hope that they shall awake to everlasting salvation.

There is one more common case in which those who are perfectly unprepared for death, may yet meet it with composure,—where there is utter carelessness and confirmed insensibility. In health they have been exhorted, entreated, and warned in vain; through the whole of life they have persisted in constant negligence or habits of sin, till the hardened conscience feels no more, and the spirit of God, long grieved and resisted, has departed in sorrow for ever. Here, is only a fatal unconcern, a deadened moral feeling, a hardened insensiblity, which nothing but the mysterious terrors of hereafter have power to quicken. Where a whole life has been

spent in the neglect or violation of the laws of God, where every call of providence and of revelation has been resisted and ineffectual—it is not to be expected, that the approach of death should produce any great change; it does in fact very seldom produce any; they die, as they have lived, careless, insensible, undone.

In all the cases which have been mentioned, you see that men may die with apparent calmness and tranquillity, while they are yet perfectly unprepared for death, and unqualified for heaven. How can you decide, then, as to the religious character or the final condition of any, merely from the calmness with which they die?

But it is not mere composure, but expressions of what is considered strong religious feeling, which leads us most often to pronounce favorably of the final condition of the dying. Let us consider then, in the next place, some circumstances which may produce these manifestations of resignation or joy, in those whom we are not authorized, by the general tenor of their lives, to consider as sincere disciples of Christ.

We find many in their last hours expressing a resignation to death, and a willingness to depart. This often arises, in irreligious persons, merely from disgust with life. The gratifications of the world are exhausted, perhaps by excess: or a lengthened disease may have rendered existence a burden; or their outward circumstances are distressed, and all their earthly

prospects are gloomy. All the ties which bind them to life are broken, all that renders it desirable is fled. They long for death, as an escape from pain, mortification, disappointment, and poverty, and they leave a world whose charm to them is departed, with joy. With all this, religion has nothing to do; their resignation and joy are neither formed by religious principles, nor sustained by religious hopes; and you cannot consider it as evincing, in any degree, a state of acceptance with God and preparation for heaven.

Again—the effect of disease on the frame may produce a feverish excitement of the imagination, which inspires raptures of unnatural joy. Persons in this situation often converse with the wild eloquence of insanity, and express religious feelings and sentiments, which, in their days of health, were entirely strangers to their bosoms. A slight derangement takes place, under the influence of which the patient sees visions of glory, and hears sounds of heavenly welcomings. It is perfectly unreasonable to regard this disturbed state of mind as an evidence of a change of heart and of acceptance with God: to imagine that here, the finger of the Deity is visibly displayed; that these visions are the effects of the immediate interposition of heaven, to comfort the departing spirit, and minister to it a foretaste of the blessedness of immortality. The age of miraculous interpositions has gone by; we have no promise of interpositions like

these; neither reason nor the scriptures give us any ground for supposing these visionary consolations to be any other than the effects of powerful disease upon the weak and exhausted mind. How different from all this was the death of our Saviour! "It is finished! Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

This excitement of the imagination sometimes takes another turn. The patient is oppressed with an unspeakable burden of horror and despair, which is often most falsely thought to be that mild and humble repentance, which is unto life. Here, too, visions are seen; but visions of awful and terrific character. In the stillness of midnight the chamber of the dying becomes brightened with infernal light; they imagine they see the regions of wo uncovered, and the flames of inextinguishable fire, blazing beneath their feet; or they behold the form of the prince of darkness approaching in terrors to seize their departing spirits. Nothing can be more absurd, nothing more inconsistent with scripture, nothing more injurious in its consequences, than to consider these delusions of a wandering imagination, religion; to term the unknown horror which disease produces, repentance; to imagine that by this wild and senseless uproar, the guilty spirit is purified from its stains, and qualified for admission into the kingdom of heaven.

Where such an excitement of the imagination does not take place, but the powers of the

mind and the feelings are in their sound and healthy state, there is often in the dying a sorrow for sin manifested, which is of at least a suspicious character, and doubtful efficacy. Where a man has lived a thoughtless and irreligious life, the near approach of death may excite remorse and apprehension. These feelings are often considered sincere repentance—the person who possesses them is thought to have atoned for all the deficiencies of a careless life, and by the sadness of an hour, to have made his peace for ever with God. But consider what are the feelings which form this death-bed sorrow. They are often nothing more than a dread of God's anger, horror and remorse at the remembrance of the past, and fearful forebodings of approaching judgment. There is nothing of that lowly and filial penitence, of that affectionate sorrow of heart, which the gospel demands as the foundation of a godly and acceptable repentance. It is not hatred of sin, but dread of its consequences; it is the fear of dying, which makes them tremble and shrink with horror. How can we believe that an hour of only anguish, and remorse, and despair, can compensate for the neglects and transgressions of a whole life? that the miseries of an hour like this, completes at once that preparation for eternity, for the accomplishment of which, the whole of life is no more than sufficient?

There is another view, in which the inefficacy

of this species of death-bed repentance is most clearly shown. Bitter and deep as the sorrows of the apparently dying man may seem, how often is it proved to be insincere! How many have you known, who, under the fear of immediate death, were filled with remorse and terror, with prayers for forgiveness and resolutions of amendment; and when God has delivered them, all has passed away like a dream—they have returned into life, careless and irreligious as before. Perhaps some who now hear me, can remember the sorrow and the solemn vows which the fear of death once excited, and may remember, too, that all have been in vain. When the sincerity of a death-bed repentance is so questionable, how can we be assured of its meeting the forgiveness of God, and availing to our final acceptance?

Even where this sorrow and apprehension are sincere, we can have no assurance that they are effectual to final salvation. We dare not limit the mercy of God: it may be extended to the sadness of an hour, and blot out the sins of a life. The penitent of a day may find forgiveness and be blest. But let us consider, that repentance is not all which God requires in his word as a qualification for heaven. Sorrow for sin, sincere as it may be, is but the first step, is but a single step, in the christian course. Salvation is assured to those only who have led sober, righteous, and godly lives; to actual holiness of character and conduct: to those

only "who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality." The promises of scripture are addressed, not to those whose day has passed in negligence and is ending in sorrow, but to those who are laboring faithfully, or whose work is accomplished. Now, it tells you, now, in your days of health and security, your days of soundness of mind and vigor of frame,—now is the accepted time, is the day of salvation.

There is another view of a different character in which it is important to consider our subject. It will not always be the case that the sincerest Christian, whose life has been devoted to a uniform service of God, can leave the world without solicitude, with undisturbed serenity and hope. It is indeed in almost all cases true, that the last hours of a departing saint are brightened with unearthly consolations, but it is not always so. Natural timidity of character, the remembrance of sins long since repented of and forgiven, great humility, deep sense of the purity and elevation of the character he has aimed to acquire, or the languor and dejection which painful and protracted illness produces, may render him anxious, or throw a shade over those hopes of blessedness, which the gospel permits him to indulge.

Now take into one view all the considerations which have been suggested; consider the many circumstances on one hand, which may cause the best Christian to leave the world in

some degree of dejection and solicitude; and on the other, which may cause an irreligious man to die with apparent composure, with deceitful hopes, with a superficial and unaccepted penitence, or with a rapturous joy;—take these views together, and we ask, if it be not perfectly unreasonable to form any decision as to the religious character or final condition of others, merely from the manner in which they die? What is the inference which we should draw from all? It is this; that we are to look to the habitual character—to the life—to these alone—in order to judge of the real condition and of the final state of ourselves or of others. We learn, that the remorse for a life of negligence or sin, which begins and ends on a deathbed, is at least extremely doubtful, if it be not utterly vain; that no apparent composure at the close of a life, not distinctly and uniformly consecrated to religion, can give by itself any ground for supposing salvation secure. We are only authorized to believe, that they who live in a sincere and universal, though perhaps imperfect obedience to God's will, who do their utmost to be holy in heart and conversation, will at last be accepted and blessed in heaven. With such persons, it is of little consequence whether their last hours close in sadness and solicitude, or be consoled and gladdened with the brightest hopes of blessedness. Salvation depends, not on the manner in which we die, but on the manner in which we live.

Life at its utmost is so short, and its continuance so precarious, that no subject should be more often contemplated, or be made more familiar to our minds, than that of our own death. It cannot be distant: God alone knows how near it may be! There are some dispositions of heart which are peculiarly demanded at that awful season; and in our days of health, we ought to consider the duties we should practise, when sickness comes and death is near. If our powers be continued to us, what are the tempers which then should be peculiarly exercised? I have now time barely to hint at some of them.

The first duty for one who is soon to die is penitence. If we have been guilty of gross sins, of constant negligence, of habitual, wilful perseverance in iniquity, repentance, doubtful as at that hour it may be, is yet all that is left to us. We ought to set about it therefore with the deepest concern. If our own consciences should then tell us, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world," still penitence is the first of duties. When life is closing and our account is ending, and the day of grace is finished, and we are hastening onward to the judgment seat of God, surely we need to remember with deep feeling, what our lives have been, and how far they have fallen short of what they ought to have been. We should then look back on the sins of our youth, on the neglected duties and actual offences of

our riper years, and above all, on the sins which most easily beset us; we should examine the deficiencies of our characters, and all that is perverse and all that is polluted in our hearts; we should think of the goodness of that Being against whom we have offended; and all our feelings of penitence should be expressed in prayer to that mercy, which despiseth not the sighings of a contrite heart.

Charity is another disposition peculiarly to be exercised at that hour. Are there any who have injured you? Forgive them from the heart. Are there any whom you have injured? Delay not to reconcile them by restitution and kindness. Is there any act of beneficence which you then can perform? Let your alms go up as a memorial before God. Are there friends whom your counsels and exhortations may turn from sin or quicken in holiness? The words of the departed leave an impression never to be effaced, and how much of consoling remembrance will be furnished to those whom you leave, by the slightest expressions of affectionate interest.

Patience is then peculiarly necessary. If our sufferings be severe, let us not forget, that they are merited; let us consider that no distress we endure is needless, and would be spared were it not for our good; and let the consideration of God's goodness hush every murmur into peace. And if the kindness of others brings alleviation to our sufferings; if we find

all the comfort provided which our situation admits; if around us stand the friends who have supported and cheered our days of health, and now are consoling us in the last struggle of nature by their affection, tears, and prayers;—what reasons shall we have for gratitude to the Father of all mercies, and how sincerely should we exercise it!

Resignation is another disposition peculiarly to be exercised in the last days of life. You have friends whom you are saddened to leave; children, perhaps, for whose protection and culture you would pray to live. But will not the God who made them ever watch over them? Is He uninterested in their welfare, or unwilling to guard and bless them? Without him, what could your care avail? With his protection, what can injure them? Life, perhaps, has charms for you, which you still desire to enjoy. But if God sees best to take you away, is it not best for you to depart? He would yet longer continue you in life, were it consistent with your real welfare. Who knows what sufferings, what trials are hanging over you? Are you unwilling that God should hide you from all, in the quietness of the grave?

When death is approaching, let these views be encouraged, that you may be resigned to his will. But the Christian may have more than resignation, for his warfare is ending and his victory is won; he is going to a world where temptation assails not, and sorrow and

sin are known no more. If you then can look upward to God with affectionate confidence, and to heaven with an assurance of hope, let these feelings be expressed. They will prove to others the reality and the power of the religion you profess, and give consolation and joy to those who weep for you, when you sleep in the dust. May God grant, my friends, that these hopes may gladden us when we die; and may our reward, like our death, be that of the righteous!

SERMON XIV.

KNOWLEDGE OF ONE ANOTHER IN A FUTURE STATE.

1 THESSALONIANS II. 19.

FOR WHAT IS OUR HOPE, OR JOY, OR CROWN OF REJOICING? ARE NOT EVEN YE, IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AT HIS COMING?

THE gospel has revealed to us the rewards of a future world as the great excitement to obedience. If we desire that this motive should have its designed influence on our hearts and conduct, we must accustom ourselves to that frequent reflection on the assurances of Christianity which shall cause us to realize their certainty, and to that contemplation on the blessedness it promises, which shall render heaven an object of interest and strong desire. Many persons whose general characters are serious, are little influenced by these revelations of the gospel. Their affections linger too fondly around the objects of earth, their aspirations for a nobler state of being are not lively, and they attain little of that exalted heavenly mindedness which Christianity requires, because, from

want of frequent meditation on the happiness of a better world, they have formed no affecting or impressive views of its nature, and have not rendered the thought of it interesting. And whatever leads us to more habitual contemplation on heaven, whatever directs more strongly towards it our desires, or engages in it our feelings, will have an important influence in giving a greater purity and spirituality to our characters.

To a mind familiar with the grandeur of those prospects which the gospel discloses, accustomed to bring them near and dwell upon them in retirement, and to connect the remembrance of them with the scenes and pursuits of life, and with the affections and hopes of the heart, the interests of this world have lost much of their power; its highest promises appear insufficient and delusive, its splendid attractions are regarded with indifference, its dissipations with pity, and its grosser pleasures seem disgusting as well as criminal.

The thought of heaven is often uninteresting from considering it as a state of solemn uniformity, in which the perfected spirits are in continual rest, or employed only in casting their crowns of glory at the foot of the throne, and celebrating, in one unwearied song, the praises of God and the Lamb. It is true, we read of a rest which remains for the people of God; but is it not a rest alone from evil and anxiety, from temptation and sorrow, from pain and sin?

Is it designed to exclude all active exercise of those noble powers, with which the Father of our being has blessed us? Are the capacities of exertion, of improvement, of benefiting others, which have been formed on earth with so much care, to be formed altogether in vain? Is not this world rather a scene of education, to fit us for accomplishing with more exalted powers the will of God, and acting as ministers of his mercy in higher regions of his universe?

It is true, the scriptures do not give precise and definite descriptions of the nature and sources of future happiness. But they give us at times hints and intimations, and from them we are at liberty to reason. And there is no inconsistency in forming some views of a better and higher state to which this is introductory, from the consideration of our nature, and of what is, by the constitution which God has given us, evidently necessary to render any state of existence a state of improvement or of joy.

There is no one accustomed to reflect on the happiness of futurity, to whom the inquiry does not often occur with deep interest, whether we shall hereafter recognise those whom we have known and loved on earth. By laying before you some considerations on this subject, I hope to lead your minds to more frequent thought and meditation, and excite more of interest in that state to which the gospel directs us to aspire.

On this, and on all other subjects, which

are merely incidental to future happiness, we are not to expect a full and clear light from the language of scripture. The gospel seems intended to do little more than declare the certainty of the rewards of obedience; and is silent on many points, which are most reasonably believed to be true. No one, for instance, who considers the nature with which we are ennobled, can doubt that the powers of improvement which we now possess, but which are not fully developed on earth, will be enlarged and perfected in heaven; for otherwise the intention of God in bestowing them, would for ever remain unanswered. But even of this the scriptures give us only occasional intimations and hints. If they seem to suppose it, if they make declarations from which it may be evidently inferred, it is all the evidence that we can expect; and we may reasonably believe it to be true. And indeed, were no intimations given, the general spirit of Christianity is so benevolent, it so consecrates all our pure affections, it so meets all the wants of the heart, and confirms the aspirations of nature; that it would be reasonable and consistent to hope, for these reasons, that those whose friendship religion has hallowed, will not eternally be separated, and that when they meet hereafter, it will be with renewed knowledge and increased affection.

There is an intimation in the text from which much may be inferred. "What," says the apostle to his beloved disciples, "What is our

hope and joy, and crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" An expression of the same kind occurs in another epistle. "Ye have acknowledged us, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye are also ours, in the day of the Lord." The apostle here declares his firm expectation, that he should meet his converts, in the presence of the Lord at his coming; that he should know and be known by them again; and that in that day they would be to each other the source of high and peculiar rejoicing. They could be in that day no crown of joy to him, nor he be their glory, if all knowledge of each other were to cease with this life; if they were then to each other the objects of no peculiar interest; or if the bonds of affection, which had united them on earth, were not continued in all their strength.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, the apostle speaks of his brethren, as "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Does he not here, as well as in the two former instances, clearly intimate, that the relation which had subsisted between him and his disciples, was not to terminate on earth, but was to subsist hereafter? It was a great excitement and motive to exertion, and he looked for his reward in bringing in person the fruits of his ministry to the Lord of the vineyard: in presenting at last the disciples whom he had converted, over whom

he had so anxiously watched, whom his instructions and warnings had guided and sanctified, perfect in christian character to God. If the apostle, then, expected to recognise his converts hereafter, and taught them to look forward to meeting him with joy; if he believed that the affections with which he had regarded them were not to be annihilated, nor the relation in which they had been connected, entirely to cease; is it unreasonable for us to cherish the same hope? Are our affections to be lost, and our friends to be known no more? Are all those relations, which to us nature has made holy, which the best feelings of the heart have cemented, and which Christianity has sanctified, to be terminated for ever at the grave? While the early disciples are to rejoice in those, whose labors redeemed them from ignorance, and first opened to them the consolations and hopes of the religion of Jesus, shall we never be permitted to express our gratitude to the friends whose counsels, example and prayers have guided or reclaimed our steps, first kindled in us the flame of piety, and taught us to live for a better world?

Again; in the parable of Dives, the rich man is represented as recognising Lazarus, and Abraham as knowing them both. But perhaps it is not safe to press the incidental and subordinate parts of a parable in proof of a doctrine. There is, however, another passage, in which our Saviour plainly declares what here is represented in a parable. "Ye shall see," said our Saviour,

when speaking to the Jews of a future state, "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God." If the patriarchs are then known by their descendants who knew them not on earth, is it absurd to believe that we shall hereafter recognise those who have been the companions of our lives, and the objects of most intimate acquaintance and interest? The prophets will then be known by those, who now know them only by the record of history, and the instructions which have been transmitted from early times. Does not this teach us, that the redeemed out of all nations shall be gathered home; that the benefactors of our race in every country and in every age,—the noble characters which have thrown a glory on our nature, the philosophers who have dedicated their powers to the cause of truth and of God, the writers whose works have enlightened, consoled, and sanctified us, and the men of piety whose example has kindled ours, and on the record of whose virtues we have delighted to dwell;—shall hereafter be made known, and become, when arrayed in the majesty of perfected beings, the objects of more exalted veneration and love?

From the Epistle to the Thessalonians it appears, that many of the disciples were mourning for the breaches which death had made on the circle of their friends; and the consolations addressed to them by the Apostle, give clear intimations of the mutual knowledge of the righteous hereafter. "Sorrow not as others who

have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, who are alive and remain, shall be caught up with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." They were here taught, that the friends who slept in Jesus, God would bring with him; that they then would meet again; be caught up together, and be for ever happy together in the presence of the Lord. There is no reason which should limit this to the mourners of Thessalonica. The same consolation is addressed to every bereaved disciple; and all may trust that the friendship begun on earth, which religion has sanctified and death interrupted, has not for ever ceased, but will be renewed and perfected when the Lord shall descend from heaven, and his saints be gathered to meet him.

Again; in the scriptures heaven is always described as a society. "I go," said our Saviour, "to prepare a place for you. I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." "He," said Paul, "who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also, and present us together with you." We read of the church of the first born, the general assembly of perfected spirits, of a multitude of the redeemed which no man can number. In this representation of heaven, there is no-

thing solitary and unconnected; the whole impression which it leaves is that of intimate union with others, mutual knowledge and affection. The servants of God who leave this world, are connected together, not solitary recipients of his mercy, not scattered alone over his wide universe. Is it not natural to imagine, that they, who have been most intimately united on earth, who have passed together through its trials, who have, from sameness of situation and circumstances, formed similar characters, should be received into the same mansions? The remembrance of the scenes of this world, of its conduct and trials, of the beings with whom we are now connected and by whom we are influenced, cannot be lost without losing the evidence of our identity. And can they who after all the anxieties of their pilgrimage have met together at last in peace, then know each other no more? Is there to be no intercourse in the society of heaven, no communication of thought and feeling, no recounting of dangers and mercies, no participation of mutual joys? Why then shall we not recognise those whom we have known on earth, if we are at last so blessed as to meet them in heaven?

The conversation of our Lord with the Sadducees has been thought to be somewhat against the sentiment, which the passages already quoted inculcate or imply. When the Sadducees had stated the case of a woman, who, according to the law of Moses, had been married successively

to seven brethren, and asked, At the resurrection whose wife shall she be? our Saviour answered, that "in the resurrection there shall be neither marrying nor giving in marriage; for they are as the angels of God." But this passage only proves that the conventional relations of society are not to be formed hereafter; that connexions intended simply to answer particular purposes in this world, terminate with this life. But it does not imply, that no knowledge of each other exists, or that affection and friendship shall end. The connexions which the society of the world renders necessary may cease; but the cast they have given to the character, the feelings they have excited, the affections they have formed, the habits they have produced, will continue; and the objects on which the heart now so fondly rests, may be the objects of a purer and more exalted interest when the frailties of nature cease, and they are met among the angels of God.

The cultivation of particular affections, of the affections arising from the parental, filial, and conjugal relations, is not only the dictate of nature, but the command of duty. And is the culture of this part of our character to be entirely useless hereafter? Are none of the feelings, which nature and Christianity have taught us to nourish, to remain? What is to destroy these affections, what to turn them to coldness and indifference? Not surely a mere passage through the grave; not our admission to the

kingdom of joy and love. When corruption is turned to incorruption, is the heart to be laid waste? are the best and purest of our social affections to be lost? and, with the weaknesses of mortality, much which now ennobles and blesses our nature, to be annihilated for ever? We think of a future state as too different in its nature from the present. Exalted, glorious, and happy indeed it is, beyond conception; exempt from frailty, freed for ever from sorrow, from trial, and from sin; but the sources of its happiness must be adapted to our nature, and will be such in kind as those which the righteous find on earth. Death does not miraculously change our characters. It only changes the mode of our existence, and introduces us to a holier and happier world; and we enter it with the dispositions which we have nourished, and the capacities of enjoyment which our care has improved. And as God has created us social beings, as much of our highest and purest delight arises from the intercourses of friendship on earth, and as the culture of our social feelings is so important a part of our present duty and of our preparation for heaven; it is surely most reasonable to believe that an exalted communion with perfected spirits will be a source of happiness hereafter, and that the friends who have been dear to us on earth, will, if we and they are worthy, be again restored to our knowledge and affection.

I would repeat a remark already made, that

on such a subject as this, we cannot expect a clear and satisfactory light from the language of scripture. But yet it seems, that on no subject connected with the happiness of heaven are its intimations more distinct, than where it teaches us to anticipate the knowledge and union of good men in heaven; and there surely is no view which reason more approves, or which seems more consonant with the general spirit of the gospel, and with the benevolence of God. But even were it not so; were the intimations of scripture altogether indistinct, or were they entirely wanting; yet the very teachings of nature, the fervent anticipations of our own hearts, would alone be sufficient to sanction the belief. Is not the voice of nature within us the voice of God? And can we believe that a hope which every human being cannot but cherish, an ardent desire so inseparably interwoven with every conception of immortality, a feeling of assurance which we recognise in every mode of religion, in the hope of the savage as well as in the aspirations of the Christian:—can we believe, that this hope would be so universal, so deep rooted in nature, if it were never to be fulfilled; if it were intended to be for ever crushed and disappointed; if God designs not, in some better state of existence, to restore to us the friends whom in wisdom and mercy he has taken away?

If, then, we look forward to a knowledge and union with one another hereafter, what influence

should it have on our present feelings and conduct?

In the first place, it should lead us to form only virtuous friendships, for these only will endure. Intimacies with the vicious, if they terminate not with life, can be renewed only to aggravate the burden of anguish and remorse. Our best earthly friends have their frailties, and often may irritate or wound us. Ought we not now cheerfully to bear them, while we look forward to a day when all weaknesses shall be past, and we shall know them only as purified and perfected spirits? If we desire to meet them again, with what care and zeal should we labor for their improvement, with what earnestness should we watch over their characters, and with what fidelity counsel, reprove, and warn them. Our influence may be one of the greatest means of nourishing their virtue and piety; and how will it add to our happiness to receive hereafter the expressions of their gratitude, whom our example or our exertions have helped to rescue from sin and prepare for heaven.

In the second place, the subject is full of consolation, and of encouragement to duty. If we weep for the friends who have departed and who sleep in Jesus, we cannot sorrow without hope. They have only passed to their reward a little before us, and soon shall we meet them again. Though they have left us, we are not forgotten by them, nor is their interest in us destroyed. If, then, we have friends now in

heaven; if our thoughts can recur to a parent on whom our infant eyes had hardly rested, or whose form has now faded from the remembrance of our youth; if there be a friend there, once dear to us as our own souls, and who left us widowed and desolate; if there be a child there, on whom all our earthly hopes had rested, whose steps to the grave we had watched with unutterable anguish, and whose departure bowed us to the dust; if we desire to meet them again, let us strive to imitate their virtues, and follow the bright path of glory by which they have ascended. Let us cherish the sacred remembrance. Let us feel that now there is a circle which connects us with a better world, and often meditate on what they are, and what we may hereafter be.

We are all passing fast away; one friend sinks after another, and soon we too must follow them. And what will prepare us to depart? Nothing but the faithful performance of duty, nothing but earnest and unfailing efforts to obtain the christian character. God grant, my friends, that we may make these efforts! that in the day of the Lord we may all appear with joy! and that in the world which is opening to receive us, none may be wanting, whom the bonds of nature, or the endearments of affection, have made near to us on earth!

SERMON XV.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE MINISTRY.

[PREACHED ON THE LORD'S DAY FOLLOWING THE AUTHOR'S ORDINATION.]

2 CORINTHIANS II. 16.

WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?

You will permit me, this morning, to speak to you of the Difficulties of the Christian Ministry, because my own mind has been led much to contemplate them, and because there must necessarily exist much misapprehension in regard to them, among those who are not particularly conversant with its various labors.

"Who is sufficient for these things?"—Who is led to utter this exclamation of anxiety and despondence? Is it some solitary recluse, who is indolently contemplating labors which he has not resolution to undertake? Is it some sincere and faithful servant of Christ, who has vainly spent his strength in the service of the gospel, and now is looking in sorrow on the long waste of his labors, cares, and tears? It is the great Apostle

of the Gentiles, who had spread through the world the knowledge of his master, and turned thousands from darkness and sin to the light and glory of the gospel; who had preached with success to the barbarians of Melita, and the polished and learned of Athens; gathered multitudes to the flock of Christ from the licentious and effeminate Corinthians, and the proud and warlike Romans; who was clothed with miraculous power, and had been visited with revelations from heaven. It is such a one, who exclaims, in view of the trials of his christian ministry, Who is sufficient for these things?

It is true, Christianity has now spread her wings over the civilized world; her ministers no longer are compelled to brave persecution, and death; but all the difficulties of their calling have not vanished away. New trials arise with new conditions of society, which cannot but awaken anxiety and fear. There are many trials —and some of them the most severe trials—under which the heart must sink in silence; which it would be useless to set before you. But there are many circumstances, relating to the common labors of the profession, the mention of which may help you to form better apprehensions of the office itself, and of your own duties in respect to it.

I observe, in the first place, that the private preparation for the active services of the profession is laborious and difficult. The great object of the ministry is to give religious instruction.

The great sources of all religious truth are indeed ever open to us; but the task of rightly interpreting the Scriptures is not an easy one. The language must be known in which they were written; the customs of the age and the events of the times; the character, feelings, and circumstances of those by whom its books were delivered, and to whom they were addressed, must all be made perfectly familiar to the mind of the public instructer; because the bulk of a people must necessarily rely almost entirely on the studies of their teacher, for the knowledge of those numberless circumstances which throw light on the facts and records of their religion.

Besides—the scriptures do not at once exhibit any connected system. Its books were written as circumstances at the time demanded; were adapted to particular occasions; and the whole scheme of Christianity is to be gathered, not from a single exposition of faith, but from short sketches of the life and conversations of its founder, accounts of the progress of the infant religion, and the letters of its Apostles to the churches they had established, or the individuals in whom they were interested. To gather from these sources clear and comprehensive views of the whole system of Christianity—both as a revelation of divine truth, and as a part of the general system of God's goodness; to gain distinct and consistent ideas of all its high doctrines, in all their various relations, connexions, and consequences; is indeed a work of toil and

perplexity. The claims of different sects are brought forward with so much zeal; contrary arguments are urged with so much force; prejudices of education and habit compel to such jealous caution; biases of temper, situation and interest are so resolutely to be resisted; so much darkness and doubt meet us at every step; and such candor, unwearied patience, long continued perseverance are ever required; that we often are tempted to sink into indifference, and content ourselves with partial, confused, and inconsistent notions of that holy faith which we are to believe and preach. Yet it is extremely important that these great views of religion should be gained and be taught; for men need to have their general views of divine truth corrected and enlarged, as well as to have just views given of the duties they are to practise.

While it is thus difficult to gain just views of the speculative and doctrinal part of the christian system, the simple knowledge of the rules and motives of practical duty is easy. What men are to *do* to be saved, is written as with a sunbeam. The ignorant cannot misunderstand it, the wayfaring man cannot err. No sincere inquirer can be ignorant of his obligations to God, his relation to Jesus Christ, his duties and his destination. From these very circumstances, desirable and happy as they are, arises a very great difficulty in the way of christian ministers. The design of ministerial instruction is less to communicate new truth, than to give impressive-

ness and efficacy to that already known. Were the truths we present novel to your minds as they are important to your welfare, they would irresistibly compel your attention, and exert an influence immediate and powerful. But while we speak of obligations, they are all coolly acknowledged. We dwell on the entire goodness of a heavenly Father, on the blessed love of a suffering Saviour, on the glorious and tremendous scenes of a future existence,—but these have long been familiar; all their grandeur and solemnity cease to arrest attention. They are sounds so often heard, that they pass by like the idle winds. The most important truths are those, too, which we most often must present to you. We can offer no novelties to awaken attention and arouse indifference. We can only repeat counsels, which have been often given;—dwell on motives, to which a thousand times you have listened; speak of feelings, which for years have been exposed to you; and yet must do all this with that anxious sense of responsibility, which teaches us that your interest in these subjects is all important, and that indifference is ruin. Besides, we must prepare our addresses to you, not when standing before you, when your presence might excite and animate our exertions and our hearts; but in the peaceful stillness of retirement, when everything conspires to quiet our minds and lull our feelings. We must be excited in our studies, not by the sight of your trials, wants, and sorrows; but by our own ima-

ginations of them, our recollections, our wishes and hopes of usefulness. If we seek plainly to lay before you your duties and obligations, and simply state the motives which enforce them; how many will turn away, inattentive and unaffected. And if, on the other hand, we endeavor to fix attention, and enforce our subjects, by clothing them in adorned expression, or art of manner, or grace of oratory; then, alas! the attention will be given less to the subject, than to the preacher; and all your interest will be bestowed on a poor, frail, perishing being, rather than on the truths of God and the concerns of your souls! Who is sufficient for these things? Who is able to arrest that serious and earnest attention,—to give all that power and impressiveness to these common and familiar truths, which alone can render them influential upon the wills and characters of men?

Connected with this difficulty of exciting attention and interest to the subjects we present, I observe, that the difficulties of preparing our public discourses can but faintly be estimated by those who are not conversant with the labors of composition. There is, in the writing of our public discourses, a mental toil and pain, a severe exertion at once of the intellect, the imagination, the memory, and the feelings, which is excessively fatiguing and exhausting. This is true of every single labor. But when week after week rolls on, and, at each successive interval, the mind, wearied and exhausted by continual effort, is yet again

tasked for its new contribution, must yet again fill its stated time with something to interest and impress; its spring and energy are gradually broken, its vigorous activity ceases, its powers become languid and dull, the fine mechanism by which it operates becomes worn and disordered, and health and spirits fast sink away.

But this trial is of little consequence, compared with one which I will next mention: for labor is the condition of life, and health and powers were given to be spent in the performance of duty and the service of God.

Another, and the greatest difficulty, in the public labors of the ministry, is, that of adapting our discourses to the wants of the people. In ministering to the improvement of others, we are not to consult our inclinations, but their wants: and to adapt the truths we deliver, the motives we would enforce, and the manner in which we present all, to the capacities, feelings, and needs of the flock. An important obstacle to our success meets us at the very entrance of our work. All the previous preparation of study and thought to fit us for the labors of the profession, have cut us off from intercourse with society and commerce with men. We grow unacquainted with human life and the human character. We know little of the modes of thinking and feeling which prevail in the world, or the various causes which influence the character and guide the will: and even the little knowledge we are enabled casually to acquire, is greatly dis-

torted and untrue, because mingled so much with speculation and false judgment. To know mankind, we must be practically conversant with them. It is not sufficient to read careful and labored writings, to look from a distance on their struggles and contentions, or even silently to watch their conduct when circumstances place them on their guard, and compel them to reservedness and the appearance of virtue. Yet to put rightly in motion the springs of human conduct, we must long have known their nature and their operation. To be successful in our addresses, we must be able to penetrate their characters and speak directly to their hearts. We must enter into their feelings, comprehend intimately the motives which give an impulse to their affections and their conduct, and, through all the darkness and confusion which cover them, discern all the pure and tender emotions, and all the dark and furious passions which rend or elevate the soul. Here then is a most trying difficulty; to preach with success, we need that knowledge of human nature, which our situation renders it almost impossible for us to acquire.

A general knowledge of human nature and life, important and difficult as it is to be acquired, is not alone sufficient; the task yet remains of suiting our instructions to the characters and circumstances of the people. We are to divide to each his portion of meat in due season. The truths of the gospel must be dispensed and adapted to every diversity of intellect, every variety of

sentiment and feeling, every degree of culture and improvement, every kind and manner of trial and temptation. How diverse and contrary the characters who gather at the temple to be instructed, warned, or animated ! How vigilant must be our observation, and how various the talents we must exercise, that all may gather from our teachings something suited to their needs and their temptations ! Who is sufficient for these things ? Who can rightly divide the word of life to all ages, capacities, characters, and necessities ? Who can suitably deliver its sublime and simple truths, its plain expositions of duty, its solemn warnings, pathetic entreaties, threatenings of wrath, affecting views of divine mercy and goodness, so that all shall be enlightened and impressed ?

The meanest of the flock has a soul to be saved ; for the weakest and guiltiest, Christ has shed his blood ; the poorest and most wretched was formed for immortality and glory. And we must render account, not how clearly we have argued, or how eloquently we have spoken ; not merely how much we have cheered and animated the pure and holy in their christian course ; but how earnestly we have preached to the ignorant and wandering, how tenderly we have comforted the penitent, how solemnly we have warned the wicked of the error of his ways. In all this, how great is our difficulty ! The weak must be made to comprehend, yet the wise must be impressed ; the most ignorant must be taught, yet the enlightened must be advised ; the vile must

be convinced, yet the pure must not be disgusted, and the devout must be edified.

While we speak to the feelings, your reason may not be persuaded and your judgment may be dissatisfied; and while we coolly reason, your hearts will be untouched, and those feelings will be dead and cold, which ought to be rising to an allmerciful Father and a better world. We may be dwelling on the mercies, hopes, and consolations of the gospel, when the impenitent should be roused by the terrors of the Lord; or while we are proclaiming the anger of God and the punishments of futurity, the humble and timid Christian is sinking in sorrow and despair. While we must lay again the foundation of repentance towards God and faith in Christ, many will need to be urged onward to perfection: and while we are anxiously illustrating some dark and yet important point, or displaying some high duty, many a dejected soul may come to be fed with the simplest bread of life, and return unsatisfied and unblest. Besides, there are hardened consciences, which must be penetrated and convinced; there are the careless, who must be made serious; the secure, who must be alarmed; the drowsy, who must be awakened and excited; the penitent to be soothed and comforted; the obstinate to be persuaded; the desponding to be reared from the dust; the timorous and hesitating to be confirmed and emboldened. We must seek to carry conviction to minds closed against argument, and awaken hearts to sympathy and devotion, which

are frozen in indifference or dead in sin. What mingled tenderness and solemnity, reproof and exhortation, earnestness and mildness, does all this require! But while we reprove, rebuke, exhort, we look around us and see many coming to the temple for our instructions, who are far risen above us in their flight towards heaven; and how often, in the discharge of the solemn and touching duties of the ministry, must the heart which performs them, sink under a sense of its own deficiencies, its own unworthiness!

How difficult and trying are our public ministrations! To gain just views of all the nature and circumstances of one duty, to apply aright one great principle to all the varieties of human situation and character,—how hard is the task! But we must gain these views of all human duties; and not merely coolly display them, but urge them forcibly on the consciences and hearts of men. To redeem one sinner from guilt and wo; to guard, and guide, and animate one immortal being amid trial and temptation in the path of holiness; how trying and anxious is the labor! Yet we must give council, and aid, and animation to the numbers of our charge; must affect the wills, and hearts, and characters of thousands; must guard the wandering footsteps of each member of the flock; and seek to conduct them all, through scenes of barrenness and danger, to the green pastures and still waters where the Shepherd of Israel gathers his fold.

The difficulties of the ministry are not ended

when the services of the pulpit cease, and the doors of the temple are closed. Difficulty, anxiety, and depression must often accompany his private labors, and even his affectionate intercourse with his people. The sublime object of his high vocation, the spiritual improvement, the salvation of the souls of his people,—is never to be lost from his sight, to cease to beat in his heart, or to inspirit his exertions. He is to be ever "watchful in all things;" to be "instant in season and out of season;" and to carry admonition, expostulation, encouragement, to all the characters he meets and the deficiencies he witnesses. In doing this, how many different tempers and tastes must he consult and adapt himself to, if he would gain attention and conciliate regard! With what mild and affectionate prudence must he meet, by his conversation and his counsels, the feelings, trials, and wants of his people!

But there are more solemn and affecting offices which the pastor must render to his charge. His heart must respond to their sorrows as well as to their joys. The flock which he has watched with anxious tenderness, he is to follow to the chamber of sickness and the silence of the tomb. He must bear to the beds of the sick his light, and comfort, and prayers; must scatter their doubts, sustain their drooping spirits, and aid to prepare the departing soul to stand before God. He must arouse the terrors of remorse in the soul which is hardened in guilt, though it be faint

with disease and fast sinking to the grave. He must speak peace to the troubled conscience, and guide the sorrowing penitent to rest in a better world. To him the heart which bereavement has laid waste, looks for the tenderest of sympathies and consolations. And many are the poor, and ignorant, and desolate, who seek in his private ministrations to be guided, comforted, and cheered. How solemn and how affecting are these duties! They are offices of the angels of mercy. But how trying must they be to our feelings, and how often must they fill our hearts with anxiety and despondence!

A mind, which is solicitously bent on the furtherance of any great object, will often be disheartened when it cannot witness its success. The influence which true religion exerts, is secret, gradual, and noiseless. It silently forms in the heart holy principles of action, breaks down the secret habits of sin, forms the taste for religious contemplation, purifies the wishes and the thoughts, elevates the standard of moral excellence, and touches the affections with the love of God and man. All this great change in the inward character of the individual often takes place in secret, and unknown. We can know the sincerity and truth of a religious character only by the conduct it manifests. And where, as among us, the influence of society operates to correct the outward manners, and to lead them to decency, mutual accommodation and order, and outward respect for religious institutions; it

becomes yet more difficult to know how far religion really affects the heart and rules the conduct. From this, often arises much discouragement to a pastor who is earnestly engaged in the cause of his master. In his moments of despondence, it will often seem that his endeavors are unblest; and that he has labored in vain. He will accuse himself of insincerity and desertion in the cause he has undertaken. The good seed he has dispensed will seem to him to have been given to the fowls of the air, though it may be secretly swelling in many a spot, or bearing its humble and odorous offering to the praise and glory of God.

But besides the discouragement thus connected with his own feelings and the uniform state of society, there will ever be many sad instances of negligence and guilt, which all his toils cannot reclaim to virtue and to God. There will be minds, which no convincing reasonings, nor solemn warnings, will ever penetrate. There may be hearts which nothing can awaken to feelings of piety. We must sometimes follow to the grave the bodies of some who have lived without God, and have died without hope; for whose repentance and salvation we have toiled, and prayed, and wept in vain. These are indeed trials. And even over most who hear us, how little can ever be the influence of any single impression! We urge upon you duties as forcibly as we can; but you must go hence immediately into a world of temptation and sin. We dwell

on the perfections of God and the mercies of Christ; but your thoughts must soon again be given to the distracting scenes of life. We seek to guide your hearts to the glories of an immortal existence; but how soon are all these forgotten amid the business of the world and the amusements of society.

How painful, then, must be the interest, how varying and trying the difficulties, how anxious and ceaseless the labors, of the minister of Christ! Supported only by his own strength, how soon would he sink under their heavy load! But he is not deserted. There is a power, mighty and unseen, which ever will sustain and cheer him. "Lo, I am with you alway," said the risen Saviour, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." In this promise, my consolation and my hope will rest. We read with solemn delight the accomplishment of this promise in that power which protected and supported the Apostles, which carried confessors with joy through persecution and death, which has watched over, and sustained, in every succeeding age, the faithful servants of Christ, who have fought the fight of faith, and have passed from the trials and toils of life, to the rest of the people of God.

There is one circumstance, my friends, which is to me a peculiar source of comfort. The annals of this society are but the record of days of tranquillity, harmony, and peace. No root of jealousy and bitterness has ever arisen to disturb

you, and the storms of contention, which have spread desolation over so many of our churches, have passed harmless by yours. How much have I here, amid all the difficulties of the Ministry, to console and support me! In all your affectionate kindness towards him who is now as an angel of God, I receive the pledge of your continued regard, while I sincerely, though feebly, strive to fill his place. I cannot express to you, the feelings which the constant and various kindness I have already received, has awakened, nor the cheerful hopes with which I enter on my ministrations among you. God grant that our mutual anticipations of usefulness and happiness may be fully realized!

SERMON XVI.

DUTIES OF A PEOPLE.

[PREACHED ON THE SABBATH SUCCEEDING THE AUTHOR'S ORDINATION.]

1 THESSALONIANS V. 12.

WE BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, TO KNOW THEM WHICH LABOR AMONG YOU, AND ARE OVER YOU IN THE LORD.

HAVING, in the morning, endeavored to exhibit some of the Difficulties of the Ministry, let me now lead you to consider some of the Duties of the People. I shall endeavor to point out, in some particulars, what feelings and conduct are required in the people, to give success to the labors of those "who are over them in the Lord."

"We beseech you, brethren," says the Apostle, "to know them who labor among you." The expression is striking and comprehensive. *To know them who labor among you*, denotes, not merely an acknowledgment of the pastoral office, but also, all those dispositions and habits which correspond to its multiplied and various services. Were the design of the pastoral office, the objects it was intended to promote, and the means it employs, soberly considered and clearly under-

stood, we could not be at a loss to know what feelings and conduct are required of those among whom it is exercised. The simple and sublime object of the christian ministry, is to promote the kingdom of God and the salvation of men; to purify and elevate the human character on earth, and to prepare it for heaven. It strives to promote this end, by seeking to present men with impressive views of their relations to God and futurity, and of their various duties; and by constantly and forcibly urging upon them the motives which should lead them to lives of holiness. It is designed to counteract the influence of worldly cares, occupations, and pleasures, by frequently bringing before the minds of men, the truths, obligations, laws, and sanctions of their religion; by the counsels, warnings, and exhortations of the pulpit; and by awakening and animating the slumbering spirit of their devotion, and their languid conceptions of spiritual subjects, by taking them for a time from the world, and calling their minds and hearts to contemplations on the mercies of God, and the glories of immortality. These are the means and ends of the gospel ministry. But any exertions of a pastor cannot, alone, ensure success. Your own dispositions and conduct must correspond to the services of his vocation, or his labors will be vain. By considering what qualities you should exercise, and what conduct you should pursue towards his public labors and private ministrations, I hope it will be best understood, what is

required in yourselves, that the services of your pastor may be successful.

I. In respect to the public labors of the ministry, it is, first, very evident, that they can be of little avail without your careful and regular attendance upon them. The services of the sanctuary are, indeed, ever exerting a silent influence on public sentiment, the moral habits of the community, and social order and peace. But this general influence affects rather the outward conduct alone, and reaches not the heart of the individual, to give purity to his motives, and sanctity to his character. That its effect should be powerful and particular, your attendance should be constant. And the obligation to worship is too solemn, its benefits are too great, its influence too important, to be all thrown away by a careless indifference, or an indolent neglect. Besides—the service of one Sabbath prepares for the duties of another. The feelings of devotion are sooner kindled in the heart, which lately glowed with their flame, and solemn and affecting associations will linger around the spot, where the soul was lately touched with some love of God and hope of heaven. A habit of constant attendance will soon repress curiosity in the desire of improvement, will give to the mind a readier apprehension of the truths which are delivered, and dispose it more easily to be convinced or impressed. The oftener too, the cares of the week are interrupted, and better hopes, and wishes, and purposes excited, the less will

be the influence of the world over our minds and feelings, when we turn aside from its scenes to hold converse with God, and to think of our duties and our destination. Be constant and regular, then, my friends, in your attendance on the services of this place, if you wish the labors of your pastor to be successful.

In the next place, it is equally important that you attend here with a proper disposition. Do not come hither, with minds ruffled and disturbed, thoughts wandering to the ends of the earth, affections cleaving to the objects you have turned aside to leave. Do not trust to the sacredness of this place, the solemn stillness of the sanctuary, or the swell of music, or the voice of prayer, to dissipate your vain imaginations, and give seriousness to your hearts. But strive, in your closets and your families, to prepare your minds for the services of the temple, to impress your hearts with your own unworthiness and God's goodness, and your need of the counsels, warnings, encouragements, which are to be delivered and enforced. The words of the preacher can have little effect on the mind, which enters on the service of God, thoughtless, dissipated, and unprepared.

Nor is the temper with which you should listen, of less importance. If you attend at the temple, only to be gratified and amused, to have your imaginations excited, to remark on the correctness of the language, or the propriety of the sentiments,—you will surely go away, unedified and

unimproved. No, my friends, the services of this place are not for public declamation, but for religious improvement. It is not the preacher who here demands your attention, who here offers himself to your censures or your applauses. It is God—your Creator and Judge, who here speaks of his will, and your duties; it is Jesus Christ—your Saviour, who here opens to you the truths of his gospel, enforced by all the sanctions of eternity; it is your eternal destination—heaven and immortality—destruction and wo—which here demand all your thoughts, and should fill all your interest and concern. Come hither, then, I entreat you, not to gratify your curiosity or your taste, but to listen to instructions drawn from the word of God, and to gain something, which shall make you wise to salvation.

There is nothing, which more certainly will prevent or destroy the success of the public labors of the ministry, than a spirit of captiousness in the hearers. A readiness to criticise, to censure, to object, will close the mind against every convincing proof, and the heart against every religious emotion. A disposition, which constantly retires in disgust at the serious and unpretending exposure of sentiments it may not entirely believe,—which goes ever away in displeasure, because the expositions of duty were common, the expressions unadorned, the manner inelegant, the voice unharmonious, though the truths were important and devoutly exhibited,—such a disposition will be made neither wiser nor better,

though life wore away in attendance on the sanctuary. We should bring hither, a temper which seeks not entertainment, but spiritual light and animation; a temper disposed to receive and be influenced by important truth, however communicated; willing to be instructed, counselled, warned; desirous of serious impression, and the excitement of devotion; open to convictions of its duties and its deficiencies, and sincerely earnest for spiritual improvement. A temper like this will never attend the worship of God's house in vain. It will gather good from every thing. It will ever find subject for its meditation or its practice, some truth or some motive, amidst all the deficiencies and imperfections which may attend the performance of divine service.

The office of a pastor is, to "watch for your souls;" to enlighten, counsel, and excite you; to save you from error and sin, and to aid your preparation for heaven. His instructions, then, should be heard, not as the cold counsels of a stranger, but the admonitions of one deeply interested in your welfare and improvement; for it is the best and dearest reward of all his labors, his consolation and crown of rejoicing, to trace among his flock the gradual increase of virtue and piety, and to behold them yielding their hearts to the influence of the gospel, and rising by holy lives to the eternal favor of God. He is to watch, too, as "one who must give an account." An ambassador of God! A delegated minister of Christ! How awful is the trust com-

mitted to him! How mighty his responsibility! Is he not, then, bound to warn, to reprove, to array your sins before you, and to proclaim the terrors of the Lord, as well as kindle your hopes and animate your affections? Let not plainness of reproof disgust, or earnest exhortation offend you. Think it not presumption, a bitter spirit, a gloomy imagination, that is importunate with you on your duties, that wearies you with calls to work out your salvation, that would disturb your spiritual security, and arouse you to your danger, and forcibly bring back your feet from the paths of death. But why do I speak of plainness of reproof, importunate entreaty, earnest exhortation? Alas! how little of these do we ever manifest! Forgive us, Christians, that we speak to you so coldly of your eternal welfare! Forgive us, gracious God, our languor in thy service, and inspire us with greater earnestness!

Another requisite in a people, that the public labors of their pastor may be successful, is, a habit of reflecting on what has been heard. The truths, which are spoken, should not pass away from your memory, when the voice of the preacher is still. These discourses can give you, at best, but a general outline of the subject, and your own reflections must supply the rest. But even were they more than outlines, still, in the rapid course of their delivery, you can have little time to pause on any single truth, however important; and when different remarks follow each

other in so quick and unbroken succession, the mind cannot easily separate any one for distinct and single observation; the impression which one remark has made, is immediately counteracted, and weakened, by that of some other; and the hearer often goes away with no definite, single impression, but with a faint, and confused, and fruitless remembrance of many. The views, too, which are given of the motives of religion, must be dwelt on in silence and solitude, before our hearts can be touched, and they acquire a permanent and effectual influence over our affections and conduct. That the services of the pulpit, then, may be beneficial, we should accustom ourselves to dwell in remembrance on what we have heard, to recall the truths which have been offered, and to confirm, by serious thought, the impressions which have been made.

But what is of yet greater importance, is, that you seriously examine the truth of what you have heard. God forbid, that the words of the speaker should be always carelessly acquiesced in; his opinions be received without examination; and the results of his studies and reflections, form the sole rule of your faith and practice. Our minds are dark with so much ignorance, are thronged with so many prejudices, are confused with so many doubts, are led astray by so many errors; our best views are mingled with so much uncertainty, imperfection, and falsehood, that we should sink under the fearful responsibility of being your only guides to truth and salvation. In

your hands, as in ours, are the oracles of God, and the instructions of Jesus Christ. Receive, then, our teachings with candid and honest minds; but do not neglect to compare them with the instructions, character, and spirit of that gospel we would preach. A people should never wholly depend for their religious views on the labors of their minister; not merely because the obligation is a most solemn one to search for truth themselves, but also because the success of his ministrations depend much on the knowledge which is gained by them at home. Their own knowledge must come in aid of the teachings of the pastor. Much will ever be said from the pulpit which will demand some previous knowledge to be at all comprehended; and many truths may be partially understood, but will be faintly and imperfectly felt, when the hearer, from previous ignorance, is unable to discern the close connexions and important relations, which they bear to other truths, on which their efficacy depends.

The last disposition which I shall mention, as requisite in reference to the public labors of a pastor, the disposition to which all others are subservient, and without which his labors will be fruitless, is—that you feel your personal interest in his services, and apply to your own hearts and conduct the truths which he delivers. The teachings of the pulpit must necessarily be general; we cannot nicely adapt our counsels and exhortations to all the varieties in the characters and circumstances of a whole people. We can

do little more than endeavor to impress you with general views of your obligations and duties, or inculcate general principles of conduct, which your own reflection must apply to the enlightening of your consciences in the particulars of your own situations, to the regulation of your affections, and the government of your lives. Let me exhort you, then, ever to consider your personal interest in the instructions here given, and the prayers which here ascend before God. Your duties are far from being ended when the services of the sanctuary cease, or even when you have coolly reflected on the truth which has been presented. The most important remains. The truths here uttered are uttered in vain, if they are dissipated when you go from this solemn retirement to the scenes of life; and the impressions here made are useless, if they are swept away by your levity when you return to your homes. We must seriously consider the relation which the views we receive of God's will, have to our own characters and our own circumstances. Let the impressions you receive, then, go with you, the rules of practice here given, govern you, the motives here urged, influence you in your intercourse with the business and pleasures of the world. Compare yourselves with the character you are called to imitate. Search your own bosoms, and know if the qualities you have learned to be essential are found in your hearts, and if the principles inculcated really rule your actions and consecrate your lives.

There is no magic in the words of a preacher, or in the rites of worship; no charm in prayers to which you coldly listen, to render you pious; no hidden power in counsels and warnings which you carelessly receive, to render you holy. Your own serious self-application, your own earnest efforts, can alone give success to the public labors of the ministry, and render them, by the grace of God, effectual to your progress in holiness, and the salvation of your souls.

II. I have thus spoken of some few qualities and habits which are necessary in a people, that the public labors of their pastor may be successful. In leading you, in the second place, to consider what feelings and conduct are requisite in reference to his private ministrations, and individual character; I feel that the subject is peculiarly delicate, and my remarks will be few.

A kind and candid disposition towards the private services of the ministry is peculiarly necessary, because they are services often attended with much difficulty and embarrassment, often most trying to the feelings, and most exposed to misapprehension and censure. The sick, and the mourning, the desolate, the ignorant, the old, and the young, the wandering, and the penitent, the doubting, the desponding,—all look to him for some office of christian sympathy and christian instruction. In all these labors, how much will he need your counsel and your charity, your support and your encouragement, your consolation and your prayers! It was observed, that

these labors are exposed to misapprehension. The motives which give rise to them cannot always be immediately known. He may seem presumptuous, when he would only speak seriously of your duty; impertinent, when he is alone seeking to promote your improvement; or negligent, when one office interferes with another, or circumstances control his inclinations, and his power. The errors of his judgment may often be thought to be faults of his heart; and the very constancy, difficulty, and multiplicity of his labors, may often expose him to the charge of remissness or deficiency. Besides, his whole life is a scene of peculiar trial. Difficulties will often occur, where prudence and wisdom know not how to decide; and with his utmost vigilance and caution, his conduct cannot always meet the wishes and the judgments of others. It becomes, then, an important duty of a people, to guard against all suspicion of his motives and character, to interpret his conduct with much charity, and to suffer no trifling indiscretions to alienate their regard; for without the esteem and affection of his flock, the labors of the pastor can be of little avail. A confidence, and openness of feeling and conduct, ought ever to be exercised from a people, towards those who are over them in the Lord; for a mutual confidence and interest is thus most strongly awakened and sustained. The office of the minister does not destroy the feelings of the man. Where the liberty of a pastor in matters of indifference is attempted

to be rigidly restrained, the mind is cramped and the feelings narrowed. But while you treat him with the confidence of friendship, exact no forced compliance of feelings and tastes, and leave him to the dictates of his own affections, you give a vigor and cheerfulness to his spirit, save him from much depression and anxiety, and animate him to a greater readiness and interest in the discharge of his important duties towards you.

But the confidence, which, more than all, you should exercise towards your pastor, is, that which relates to your own religious feelings, sentiments and hopes. If you suffer him to be a stranger to your spiritual state, his power will be diminished of consulting the wants of his people, and adapting his public and private ministrations to your circumstances. A shepherd of the flock of Christ,—he must know the trials, sorrows, and doubts, of those he would guard and guide, that his counsel may direct, and his exhortations may animate them. But this knowledge must be gained less by his own discernment, than by the confidence and openness of your intercourse. And how much will you withhold, when you conceal from him your feelings of devotion, your purposes of obedience, your trials of spirit, your hopes of immortality—how much will you withhold the best sources of his consolation and his joy! For it is the sole end of his ministry—its labors and anxieties, its hopes and prayers, to promote your spiritual improvement, to save you from folly, error, and sin; to form you to the

christian character, and to present you at last, pure, spotless, and holy, to the great shepherd and bishop of your souls.

I have thus endeavored, my friends, to set before you some of the duties of a people. God grant you his blessing in your endeavors to discharge them! I have said much of candor and confidence, not because I distrusted your kindness—how could I doubt it?—but because it was important to the subject. I need not ask you to expect not from the weakness of youth, the prudence, wisdom, and maturity of age, or to remember, that many things, which in the old are acceptable, would be unbecoming in the young. I need not ask you to overlook, amidst the difficult services of the profession, the many imperfections which must ever attend my best efforts; or to remember, that from the constant and extensive labors of this place, I must often appear to address you with a languid body, a wearied mind and an exhausted spirit; or that I must deny myself much of that private intercourse with you and your families, which it would be most grateful to me to give; but which can be given, without neglect of other duties, only when the labors of the profession have become familiar by long habit, and years have lessened the difficulty of its services.

There is a circumstance which cannot but excite a peculiar distrust of myself. I am to follow the footsteps of a venerable servant of God; whose rational and unaffected piety, whose warm affections, whose many years of devoted fidelity,

had taught you to look up to him with a filial reverence and love. How grateful to his departed spirit is the knowledge of your affection and attachment to his memory! But under any circumstances, I should, indeed, be insensible, could I enter, without a deep and fearful anxiety, on the labors of that ministry to which I am consecrated. When I reflect on all the trials and difficulties of the sacred office; its solemn importance, its mighty responsibility; when I think of the influence which this connexion will have on the character and eternal destiny of thousands of human beings; my heart sinks within me. Grant me, I entreat you, your prayers, that I may be guided and strengthened; bear me sometimes in your hearts to the throne of that mercy, which alone can support my weakness, and bless my endeavors. There is, and there should be, much of cheerfulness and joy, when a new laborer enters the vineyard of the Lord. But let us not forget the solemn obligation which this connexion imposes. Let us never forget, that one day we shall stand at the judgment seat of Christ, to render account how I have preached, and how you have heard. But when all our trials, and all our privileges shall have passed away; when other voices shall sound from this place, other worshippers be gathered within these walls; when all these generations of the living shall be numbered with the dead;—God grant, that our names may be written among the redeemed in his heavenly kingdom!

EXTRACTS.

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A WORLDLY TEMPER UNFAVORABLE TO THE CULTIVATION OF PIETY.

THERE is another christian disposition utterly irreconcilable with a worldly temper. "If any man love the world, the *love of the Father is not in him.*" The formation of pious dispositions, like that of all others, is gradual, and is the result of all continued care, attention, and labor. While in every improvement of the christian character, we need the aid of the Spirit which "helpeth our infirmities," we are never to expect that the flame of piety will be kindled in our hearts by any mysterious and miraculous operation. To acquire a love of God, we must often and deliberately contemplate his character, accustom our minds to notice his agency in the harmony of nature's laws, the magnificent scenery of his creation, the disposals of his providence; and to attend to the teachings of his revelation, with devout and docile minds. All this requires deliberate, continued, and frequent attention. We need minds, composed, undistracted, and

serious. Without this, our views of his perfections will be confused and unworthy, and will fail to impress our minds, or interest our affections. Now what is the state of mind produced by a warm attachment to the world, and constant pursuit of its concerns? Is it not a state of hurry, distraction, and anxiety? Is not devotion to the cares or the pleasures of life, fatal to that mental serenity, that devotional seriousness, in which alone the inclination or the capacity exists, of attending to the manifestations of God's character, in such a manner as shall awaken us to a love of him?

The objects of the world, too, are sensible, and the soul which long has conversed only with them, loses the power of mental abstraction, and of embracing, with a feeling of their reality, objects of an unearthly and spiritual nature. They who have made most exertions to nourish in their hearts the love of God, are conscious how much its strength and liveliness are impaired by their unavoidable intercourse with the world. And it is only by their seasons of hallowed retirement from its fascinations and its cares, that it is kept from expiring. If this be the case with the most devout, how impossible must it be to excite or maintain the love of God in one whose thoughts and affections are all wasted on the world, and whose life of labor or pleasure, day after day, and year after year, rolls away, unbroken and unredeemed by any season of religious retirement, and holy contemplation.

To maintain the love of God, the good impressions which may at any time have been given, must be watched over, deepened, and enlivened, by frequent and long continued reflection. But who does not know how rapidly the bustle, and care, and excitement of the world, weaken and obliterate the impressions which the good spirit has made on the heart? The good seed may be sown, but it will immediately be scattered to the winds; or if it spring up, it will be only to arise amidst thorns and weeds, transient, unproductive, and useless. It is thus that a love and pursuit of the world, either entirely prevent the mind from sufficiently attending to the character of God to require devotional affections, or else destroy the impressions which may at times have been received. But this is not all. Attachment to the world has an immediate tendency greatly to impair, if not gradually to destroy, the moral sensibility, so far as devotional feeling is concerned. That such is the natural effect of voluptuousness, avarice, or excessive ambition, is very evident; but it is in a great degree produced by attachment to the world, when it exists in less obnoxious forms. Susceptibility to religious impressions, and to devotional feelings, is given us by nature; but, like all other intellectual or moral powers, it must be protected, and nourished, and strengthened, by our care and our exertions. When neglected, it fast decays; until, at last, it becomes so far paralyzed, that no appeals or impressions

are powerful enough to quicken it to life and feeling. An unceasing attention to worldly business, by withdrawing our regard from religious truths, by rendering us averse to serious and continued contemplation, and by occupying our minds with the scenes and objects of time and sense, thus impairs the sensibility of our hearts, and renders it difficult, if not at last impossible, to awaken them to lively or permanent feelings of devotion. * * *

In the last place. Love of the world is the source of the most fatal passions, and most trying temptations. To that fountain of bitterness, we may trace most of the envyings and jealousies, hatreds and animosities, which have blasted at once the characters and happiness of individuals, and turned the peace and mutual confidence of society to discord and distrust. What woes and crimes have darkened the career of worldly ambition! And who can number the abuses of conscience, the deadened moral feelings, the injuries, oppressions, and frauds, the violations of the laws of man and of God, which have arisen from an uncontrolled love of wealth, or of power? What was it which made the Son of God, when upon earth, the hatred of the Pharisees, and the persecuted victim of rulers and priests? Was it not that they loved the praise of men, and the distinctions and splendors of rank and office? What inflamed the passions of the Jewish population, and turned their shouts of Hosanna to imprecations and curses, but the

disappointment of their proud and ambitious hopes, and their unwillingness to acknowledge as their Messiah, one who was a man of sorrows? What was it but the fear of Cæsar, and a dread of relinquishing the shadow of authority he held, which made Pilate condemn one, whom he felt and acknowledged to be innocent? And what but a sordid avarice, brought the miserable Judas to betray to the malice of enemies, his Master and Lord? Christians—in all this, you see the effects of a love of the world. We, too, betray the cause of our Master, and render all that he hath done for us, vain, when we suffer the world to gain possession of our hearts, and in our pursuit of its business or its pleasures, neglect to form that holiness and spirituality of character, which his teachings, and examples, and death, all were designed to urge us to acquire. When we think how fearful were the consequences which flowed from love of the world, in him who betrayed, and those who crucified him, let us remember that the same passions are in us which ruled in them; that the same world which overcame them, addresses its temptations to us; and that if we yield ourselves to their influence, though we know not what evils in this world they may bring, yet we may be assured that they will at last be equally fatal to the concerns of our souls.

DANGERS OF A LIFE OF BUSINESS.

The situation in which God has placed man, renders it indispensably necessary, that attention and care should be habitually given to the things of this life; and the scriptures contain many precepts and exhortations to constant industry in our temporal concerns. We are commanded to "be not slothful in business," as well as to be "fervent in spirit;" and to "do with our might whatsoever our hand findeth to do." Most of the prescribed duties of religion are adapted to us, as thus necessarily occupied and interested in temporal concerns; and there is nothing in the demands of religion, irreconcilable with them. It is, in fact, in ordinary life, amidst the business of the world, in its various cares and enjoyments, in its diversified intercourses with others, that the principal sphere of our duty lies, and that the religious character is to be exercised and displayed. Still, every condition is a condition of trial, and attended with its peculiar difficulties and temptations. To all, is the exhortation of our Saviour important, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with the cares of this life." And there are great and peculiar dangers attending a life devoted, as the lives of most of us necessarily are, to worldly business, which should be often considered with seriousness, and guarded against with solicitude and vigilance.

In a life which is very much devoted to the business of the world, there is great danger of adopting a *low standard of religious character.* Incessant occupation prevents the study of christian duties. Men of active lives are apt to have inadequate ideas of the importance of those qualities and habits of the christian life, which have no immediate relation to the business of the world. They feel the obligation of integrity, justice, fidelity in trusts, and honest industry; but they do not enough consider that these, though indispensably necessary, yet form but a small part of the christian character, and that the virtues which are peculiarly distinguished in the gospel, are the love of God, the forgiveness of injuries, humility, superiority to the world, and purity of heart. They who mix continually with men, naturally adopt that standard of religious character, which public opinion is willing to acknowledge. But the standard adopted in that general and promiscuous society, termed *the world*, falls far below the lofty requisitions of the christian system. Many of the passive, self-denying, and humble virtues, which the gospel delights to honor, the world thinks mean and contemptible; and that proud, ambitious, unyielding spirit, which is the favorite of the world, Christianity most solemnly denounces. Those christian virtues, which all acknowledge important and praiseworthy, the general standard of society does not require in that high perfection on which the gospel imperatively insists. Great allowance

is made for actions of a doubtful character; a wide permission granted for the neglect of the plainest duties, where neglect does not directly injure society; and an insufficient solicitude discovered for consistent and universal holiness.

The great mistake is often made, also, of considering religion as entirely separated from the conduct of common life. There is great danger, therefore, lest those who are continually occupied in business, should adopt a very low standard of religious character, and should consequently remain reluctant to make exertions for the acquisition of what they deem a needless strictness of virtue and piety. It is sometimes the case, that the standard of moral obligation is peculiarly low, with respect to the concerns of business. It is often identified with civil law; and a man considers himself to have fulfilled all moral obligation, if he step not beyond the boundary which the law of the land has traced and sanctioned, although the higher laws of honorable equity and of christian kindness be directly transgressed. The same willingness to accommodate, and the same endeavor to benefit others, though it be at some little expense of convenience or profit, which in ordinary life is ever expected and given; it is often considered as manifesting no want of charity to withhold in the intercourse of business. But we ought never to forget, that no intercourse or concern of life lies beyond even the letter of the christian rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them."

Again, in a life of worldly business, there is peculiar danger that the selfish passions will be too much encouraged and indulged. In many of the concerns of business, our own interests are brought into direct and incessant competition with the interests of others; our own advancement is always the direct object of pursuit; the selfish passions are continually addressed and excited, and great care and self-government are requisite, lest they stifle and wither all the feelings of generous benevolence, and settle into the spirit of narrow, morose, and craving selfishness; lest we envy the success of our neighbor, and find a malicious joy in his overthrow; lest, in our interfering intercourses with others, we be drawn to deviate from the path of strict integrity by the prospect of avoiding inconvenience or loss, or of securing to ourselves some seemingly important benefit.

Another danger arises from the influence of evil customs or bad examples. A compliance is often urged and expected with customs which we feel to be, if not directly forbidden, at least disastrous in their moral influence. The voice and example of others, and the fear of censure and ridicule, are formidable temptations, and it requires much serious reflection, much strength of principle, much elevation of moral feeling, to enable us at all times to stand firm and independent, when the current of popular prejudice is foaming and dashing against us. The fear of exciting remark, or provoking the sneers of those

with whom business brings them constantly in contact, has often prevented men from performing duties, which they felt themselves solemnly bound to discharge, and from aiming professedly at any strictness or elevation of religious character, superior to that which those around them were willing to acknowledge consistent and proper. Against this we ought ever most anxiously to guard. We should look for our guide, not to the opinions of others, but to the laws and example of Christ. We should give that serious and frequent attention to the duties of the christian life, which shall enable us to understand them aright; and then, if we have any desire of the favor of God, and any concern for the rewards of heaven, let us discharge those duties with unhesitating readiness, independence, and fidelity.

NECESSITY OF SPIRITUAL AFFECTIONS.

It is this view which I now wish you to consider—that while the gospel insists on the practice of the ordinary moral virtues, it demands, also, the highest cultivation of the heart.

1. We are commanded as expressly in the gospel to acquire and maintain dispositions of humility, devotion, heavenly-mindedness, as we are to practise the most necessary duties of active life. The obligation is equal in respect to both. We are no more at liberty to neglect one

branch of commands, than the other; and to neglect the acquisition of these dispositions, is as much a violation of the christian laws, as to be wanting in the practice of justice and fidelity in ordinary life. Every one feels that the maintenance of humility and heavenly-mindedness would be insufficient without the moral virtues, and could not atone for a want of honesty, usefulness, or benevolence. Is not the principle equally correct, that justice and integrity in common affairs, however uniform and strict, cannot atone for the absence of that spirituality of feeling, that devotion and humility, which are enjoined with an equal imperativeness and urgency?

2. The moral habits of justice, fidelity, and honorable usefulness, are duties relating directly to men only; but there are dispositions and duties enjoined, of which God and his Son are the direct and immediate objects—reverence, fervent gratitude, trust, affection, a sense of accountability, constant reference to the divine will, and all-controlling desires of the divine approbation. Why should we imagine that our dispositions and duties towards God, are of less importance or of feebler obligation, may be neglected or violated with less criminality, than our duties towards men?—that humility and poverty of spirit, which our Saviour has so signally enjoined and blessed, are of less value in the sight of God, and heavenly mindedness of less importance to the christian character, than

those virtues which relate exclusively to the intercourses of human society, and the interests of the present world.

3. But when you read the New Testament you ever find a peculiar stress laid upon these spiritual dispositions. The contrite humility of the publican is pointed out as the characteristic of an acceptable worshipper. It was his own meekness and lowliness of heart, which our Saviour called his disciples peculiarly to imitate. His first blessings were pronounced on the poor in spirit, on the pure in heart, on those that hunger and thirst after righteousness. No disposition is more strictly condemned than that of conformity to the world; none urged with more frequency and force, than that whose desires and affections rest supremely on heaven. That practical love of Christ which leads to effort, to vigilance, to self-denial, is ever preferred to the most praiseworthy of human affections. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." What language can be more strong than that which enjoins a supreme love of God? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"—not with a divided affection, not with a partial control—but "with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." Now all these dispositions are enjoined, not merely as desirable, not as manifesting exemplariness of religious character, but as the essential requirements, the peculiar and ordinary qualifications, the very characteristics of a Christian. When the in-

junctions of the gospel are so intelligible, so unqualified, so authoritative,—are we to say that Christianity demands no more than justice and fidelity in the social relations, and habits of useful industry, and freedom from gross sins? Can we believe ourselves Christians indeed, however exemplary in these duties of common morality, if we are wanting in humility, in heavenly-mindedness, and in an awful and fervent love of God?

4. Christianity is indeed something more than a code of moral rules for the regulation of the practice, to which appropriate sanctions are annexed. It is even more conversant with dispositions, principles, and habits of mind. It is peculiarly a religion of the affections. Its seat is in the heart. It operates not merely by the simplicity of its practical rules, and the solemnity of its final retributions; but would elevate and sanctify all the sentiments, desires, and feelings of the human soul, by the influence of its revelations, by the lofty views it discloses of the character and government of God, and the moral relations and final destiny of man. Its first aim is to form in the heart holy dispositions; and its laws are but the prescribed modes in which these dispositions are to be manifested in the conduct. And in this view it is most wisely adapted to our nature and wants. The affections are the most important part of our constitution, and the capacity of their cultivation is one of the highest privileges of our nature. It is they which give its whole coloring to the character they pervade;

and the various degrees in which they are cultivated and elevated, form the greatest moral distinctions between different characters. How should we describe the character of a Christian, but by representing it as humble, meek, spiritual, governed throughout by a deep and fervent love of God, evinced in fruits of piety and charity? If these hallowed affections are wanting, are we not to think that the best influences of the religion of Jesus are as yet unfelt and unknown? Is it not very possible for us to be strictly just, and honest, and faithful to the common obligations of life, and yet be selfish, worldly, undevout, and sensual? And how feeble are our claims to the christian character, if this be the case!

In order, then, to discover what degree of religious worth there is in any discharge of duty, we must look into the motive which prompts it. If we are honest in dealing, upright in trusts, faithful in domestic relations, and kind to our neighbor, only because decency or public opinion requires it, because our temporal interest would suffer without it, because a contrary conduct would be infamous,—however we may gain respect from men, or success in the world, we have no authority to consider it, in any proper sense, religious conduct,—far less to imagine that it is all that the gospel demands. And moreover, the practice of these virtues does not so much manifest exemplariness of life, as the want of them would indicate depravity. The gospel calls us to act upon higher and purer motives.

It is where the practical virtues of ordinary life spring from principles and feelings which Christianity has formed and sanctified, where they are the manifestations of a sound piety burning deeply in the heart, where they are intimately connected with the pure and elevated graces of a devout and humble spirit, that we can consider them as the sure and adequate evidences of christian character.

5. There is another view in which the requisition of spiritual affections, in addition to moral habits, seems of the highest importance,—they are necessary as a qualification for heaven. Heaven is to be considered less as a stipulated reward for moral conduct, than as a purer and higher state of being, into which the soul, which has been cleansed from the pollutions, and exalted by the trials of this world, is permitted to enter. We think of that better state as unearthly, refined, and spiritual; and a character like this is requisite in all who would be qualified to share in its services or its joys. This character is not formed by the observance of the common rules of morality alone, however strict and uniform; we need, besides this, humility, superiority to the world, and fervent and heartfelt piety. The practical duties of life terminate at the grave; but the dispositions which Christianity has formed, the spiritual affections she has enkindled, endure for ever; and when the competitions and wants of this life, which give scope for the moral virtues, are known no more, the desires and

feelings which Christianity has sanctified, will flourish with purer vigor, and be productive of more exalted felicity.

DEVOTION.

Devotion is not a distinct and single quality, but a general state of mind and heart. It implies a mind deeply impressed with a sense of God, in which the remembrance of him is intimately associated and mingled with its ordinary trains of thought, which naturally connects the thought of his agency with the scenes and events of life, and which in its hours of silence and repose, rises to him as to the leading object of its contemplation and interest. Devotion implies a quick sensibility of pious affections, a susceptibility of receiving touching views of the divine character, habitual feelings of veneration and thankfulness, joy and hope in him, and a prevalent and all controlling desire to gain his favor. Devotion is often supposed to consist entirely in the performance of secret and retired duties of meditation and prayer; whereas it is an all pervading spirit, which warms at the heart, directing all its desires, and feelings, and hopes, and whose influence is felt through the whole conduct. It does not require the knees to be always bowed, and the voice to be always ascending; it waits not for stated periods, and is not confined to the closet

or the temple. God will be acceptably worshipped wherever the heart rises to him, whether it be from amidst the activity of business, or in silence and solitude. And he is most devout, whose mind is most habitually sensible of God's presence, and most constantly and earnestly desirous to obey his will and to gain his favor. Prayer, indeed, is the natural expression of a devotional temper, and the most important means of exciting and nourishing it. It presents to the mind of the suppliant those awful and affecting views of the divine character, of our intimate connexion with God, dependence upon him, and obligations to him, which kindle and sustain the devout affections. But the influence of the spirit of devotion is felt on prayer as well as on other parts of the christian life; for to the devout man, prayer is not merely a means and a duty, but a privilege and a delight. He rejoices in approaching to God, as the being in whom he lives, and moves, and enjoys, the healer of his infirmities, and the forgiver of his sins—in casting himself on his care, and in pouring out at his feet the overflowing expressions of a heart too full to be restrained.

On his hours of meditation and solitary thought, too, devotion breathes a hallowing influence. There is a high and awful delight in contemplating the character of that God, who at all times is so mysteriously present, in noting in all the operations of nature, his silent and unceasing agency, in meditating on his past dispen-

sations to our race, on that providential government which orders the circumstances and rules the destinies of all; which, even in scenes of convulsion and disorder, is carrying on the grand system of human improvement, and causing all to minister to the noblest results. The spirit of devotion opens "a new heaven and a new earth," to the soul it has touched and sanctified. It purges the eye that it may see the divinity in all the grandeur and beauty of his works; it opens the dull ear that it may hear the endless voices of thanksgiving and praise, which ascend from the wide creation his hand sustains and his bounty blesses; and with consoling, prophetic hope, it calls him to look forward to the world where he shall see God as he is, and be the object and the witness of mightier displays of his wisdom and mercy. * * *

Devotion regards the principles as well as the feelings; is a powerful motive and rule of conduct. A devout man carries his pious feelings and views to the ordinary scenes and labors of life. He feels not merely determined on obedience where the laws of the gospel are direct and plain, but he regards the various services which arise from his situation in the world, and his connexion with others, as duties which God calls him to perform, and he endeavors faithfully to perform them in the hope of gaining his approbation.

In this view, no action, however trifling, is insignificant, and the daily concerns of life

acquire a new interest and higher importance. And those actions and calls of ordinary life which others leave to accident and chance, become the means and opportunities of religious service. There is thus a consistency in his religion. No part of life is considered as not susceptible of religious regulation; but all is sanctified by constant reference to the divine will, and by habitual and all pervading feelings of piety. This is that worship of the spirit, which our Saviour enjoins. This is the life to which the apostle exhorts—"Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

PRIVATE PRAYER.

PRAYER is always impressive and affecting in proportion as it is particular, and comes home to our peculiar feelings and wants. Now the petitions which are offered in secret are naturally particular, they are the simple expressions of our own desires, the solitary aspirations of our own hearts. There must then be more circumstantial recollection of wants, and mercies, and weaknesses, and sins; there must be an earnestness which will not often be felt when we join with others to express those general wishes to God in which all have an equal interest. It is in private, too, that our own intimate connexion and entire dependence on God is most deeply felt.

It is when we approach him in secret to commend to him our little interests, to acknowledge our gratitude for those minute and unceasing benefits his hand is ever bestowing on ourselves, to implore his support to the frailties we feel, and his guardianship in dangers yet to come, that we most realize how inexpressibly tender and gracious is that providence, which watches for our good, and, amidst the immensity of the dependent universe, overlooks not our little wants, listens to our faintest sighs, provides with more than parental kindness for our protection and enjoyment. It is the views, often repeated, which private prayer thus presents, which form in the heart of the sincere suppliant those habitual feelings of childlike confidence, of affectionate gratitude, and cheerful and tender devotion, which more than any other feelings are acceptable and blest.

When in the retirement of our closets we have communed with our own heart, and remembered our past conduct, and have numbered our sins before God, and confessed them in penitence, we cannot then turn away to tread again the same path of unworthiness; we cannot immediately rush into the scene of temptation from which we have implored to be peculiarly delivered, or neglect the duties in which we have particularly sought God's grace to aid us, or repeat the transgressions over which the tears of contrition have just been shed. The particularity of private prayer has thus a powerful effect in giving a greater tenderness to the conscience, and adding

strength to the motives and feelings from which a holy obedience springs. And when we have in solitude thus seriously reflected on ourselves and our condition, our duties and our temptations, our present character and our prospects hereafter, and have commended ourselves to God's care and support, we make all the preparation in our power for the services of the christian life, and may go forth again to its trials, strengthened with a holier might.

PRIVATE PRAYER A PREPARATION FOR SOCIAL WORSHIP.

We need private prayer as a preparation for that which is social. If we desire that God should hear and accept us, our prayers must be offered with fervor and earnestness. A devotional spirit must warm our hearts, and hallow the petitions that rise from our lips. But a devotional spirit can be nourished best, if not only, in private. It must be made habitual too, if we would have it pervade our prayers. It cannot be assumed at will, like the consecrated garments of the priest, but must at all times array us. And this habitual feeling of devotion can only be sustained by the frequent excitement, and often renewed expressions of it, in our solitary prayers. Without this private preparation, we may indeed bow with our families when the day rises or the shadows of night descend, but our prayers will be generally distracted and

formal. We may gather at the temple and listen to the voice of others, but our minds will be wandering and our hearts be unaffected. The altar may be spread and the sacrifice may be prepared, but the fire will be wanting, and no accepted offering will rise.

Without this private preparation, we cannot enter into the spirit of social prayer. Public prayer must necessarily be general; and general expressions are unaffecting. But when we go from the solitude in which we have held communion with God, have acknowledged his goodness, and implored his mercy and support particularly to ourselves, then the voice of public prayer will awaken the remembrance of thoughts and feelings we have been indulging in private. When the public confession of sin is made, we shall think of our own deficiencies of character, neglect of duty, and acts of sin. And when all around us are rendering their common praise to God for his universal goodness, our praises will be quickened by the recollection of the private mercies he has bestowed on us. In this way we shall apply to ourselves all the general praises of the public devotion, and join in it with sincerity and with feeling. It is in a great degree the want of this private preparation which renders public prayers so uninteresting, and causes us often to wait on them with so much careless inattention or lifeless formality.

PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF PRAYER.

Prayer not only gives fervency to devotion, and elevation to the feelings; it operates on the conscience. It is prayer which, more than anything, makes us realize the constant and immediate inspection of God. When we address ourselves directly to him, we cannot but remember that he ever hears our words, and witnesses our actions; we feel that we are in his presence, and that no darkness nor solitude can conceal us from his view; and we cannot go away and at once feel that we are removed from his observation, or cease to remember that his eye yet watches our steps. Who can be conscious of this without some deep sense of the solemnity of his situation, and of the obligations he is under ever to order his actions as seeing Him who is invisible?

Besides, in prayer we continually and solemnly acknowledge before God our obligations and our duties. And no human soul can be so fearfully presumptuous as thus habitually to bring to his conscience the deep conviction of his duties, and solemnly acknowledge them to God, profess his unaffected purposes of obedience, and seek from him the strength and mercy which he needs, and then return with indifference to a course of wilful transgression. We must at least *strive* to relinquish our sins, or the voice of prayer would be to us a tremendous warning we could not hear, and a burden of remorse and misery too heavy for us to endure.

Besides, we cannot in sincerity acknowledge our obligations before God, and not feel some sense of our deficiencies, some need of forgiveness and amendment. When we recount before God the duties we pray to be enabled to practise, shall we not remember wherein we have failed? When we pray to be made pure, can we forget the disorders of our hearts, and the irregularities of our appetites and passions? When we supplicate for feelings of charity, can we then forget our unkindnesses, injuries, or cold neglect of others? When we ask for the gift of a heart grateful for mercy, and filled with pious and obedient affections, can we avoid being conscious of our poor offerings of thankfulness, our weak and wavering devotion, and our ungrateful returns to him who giveth all? And who can be so presumptuous as solemnly to confess before God his own particular sins, and earnestly to pray for forgiveness, without deep and solemn purposes to avoid the occasions of sin, to resist future temptations with fortitude, and to strive with vigilant earnestness to amend all that has been amiss? Unaffected prayer thus teaches us to know ourselves, awakens us to watchfulness, is a perpetual exercise of repentance, gives vigor and effectiveness to good resolutions, and furnishes a constant motive to resistance of sin, and to amendment and holiness of life.

THE PROPER OBJECTS OF PRAYER.

WHAT are the blessings which we may ask from God, with most propriety and with most frequency?

In regard to temporal goods, we are evidently permitted to pray for those things which are necessary for our protection, support, and comfort, and to deprecate those evils which would render life wretched. "Give us our daily bread, and deliver us from evil," form part of the prayer which our Saviour himself has taught us. When we go beyond this, it is doubtless best not to pray with particularity for temporal gifts. We know not what earthly circumstances would be best for us. The apparent good we desire, may bring with it a burden of misery, and the seeming evil we would deprecate, may prove to us the greatest of mercies; or we might supplicate for gifts, which it would be inconsistent with the designs of providence and with the wisdom and mercy of God to bestow. We ought then to pray, that God would grant his temporal blessings to us, not according to the measure of our ignorant desires, but according to our necessities, and his own wisdom and goodness. Our usual prayers for the goods of this life ought to be in general language, and to be offered with entire submission and cheerful acquiescence. We should ask them to be granted only so far as God shall see best for us; and then our prayers will surely find acceptance and meet their reward. If what

we seek would be injurious, our very petition is that they should be withheld; and if the grant of them would, indeed, be a blessing to us, we may rest in the assurance that they will be bestowed. This evidently should be the usual mode of offering our prayers in respect to the good things of this life.

But there are blessings which we may and ought to pray for, with particularity, with earnestness, with importunity. These are blessings all important for us to receive, proper at all times to be sought, and most consistent with the merciful designs and worthy the perfect character of God to bestow. Spiritual blessings, the forgiveness of our sins, the aid of God's grace, his wisdom to direct, his power to restrain and guard, his assistance to further, his consolations to comfort, and his favor to bless us; we are exhorted constantly to solicit, and he has promised them to our prayers. These should form the great subjects of our supplications. In comparison of these, all other benefits are too trifling, too transient, to be named before him. Here, no minuteness is improper, no urgency misplaced. We should on these subjects open before him our hearts undisguised and unrestrained. We should acknowledge our unworthiness, not merely in general phrases, but number before him our particular transgressions and neglects, that his forgiveness may blot them out. We should remember not only the temptations which are common to us and to others, but our own peculiar occa-

sions of offending, and pray to be guarded against them. We should dwell not merely on our general want of holy principles and sanctified affections, but on those single principles we need to establish, those peculiar feelings we need to cherish, and those particular dispositions of piety we ought to form; and fervently solicit God's grace to create or confirm them, and to render their influence effectual on our lives. We should remember not only our general duties as men and as Christians, but those private and peculiar duties which arise from our own stations in society, our circumstances in the world, and our own connexions with others; and ask of God that light and strength which shall enable us to perform them with faithfulness and acceptance.

THE MANNER IN WHICH PRAYER SHOULD BE PERFORMED.

It should, in the first place, be performed with deliberate composure of mind, and recollection and seriousness of spirit. Consider what prayer is—a direct address to the Lord God Almighty, to Him whose word brought all beings into existence; on whose will all, every instant, are dependant, and at whose word all would vanish and be annihilated: to Him in whose sight the heavens are unclean, and the myriads of glorified spirits that bow before him are impure. An

address, too, offered by beings such as we are, frail, ignorant, erring, guilty creatures of the dust, whose strength is but weakness, whose best services are polluted, and who are continually offending that God whose awful presence we would enter. Surely when we consider to what a being prayer is offered, and from whom it ascends, we must feel the need of composure and solemnity. Besides, prayer is not a formal rite, a solemn but insignificant ceremony; it is the expression of our desires to him who can fill them with good. We need, therefore, that our wandering thoughts be recalled, that our hurried spirits should rest, and that we seriously reflect on our wants and the blessings we are to seek. For otherwise our petitions will be offered in rashness, and God be approached with only a heedless service of the lips.

Every one who has been habitual in prayer, has found frequent reasons for sorrow and self-reproach from the levity, distraction and wanderings of thought, which attend our approaches to God. The great cause of this is the want of a deliberate preparation of mind and heart, of serious and thoughtful recollection. It arises from the inattention and carelessness with which we often enter on the duty. And why should we expect so solemn a service to be performed with serious and undisturbed devotion, when we have but just turned aside from business, or from pleasure, and when we rush into the nearer presence of God with minds crowded and distracted

by recent cares, or rendered gay and careless with unsobered joy? It is true there may be distractions of thought and languor of feeling, when most care has been taken to make the heart right for the duty. But it is then not our fault but our infirmity, and will find forgiveness in Him, who remembers that we are but dust, and who accepts our poor services, not according to the imperfections which deform them, but according to the sincerity with which they are offered. But these distractions of mind may in a great degree be prevented by *watching*, as the apostle terms it, unto prayer; by previously endeavoring to compose our minds to seriousness, and to banish for a time everything from our remembrance, but our own characters and wants, and the awful presence of God.

We should, in the next place, pray not only with minds freed from distracting thoughts, but with hearts freed from corrupt desires and resolved on amendment and holiness. True, indeed, while on earth we never can offer to God affections entirely sanctified; strange fire will sometimes mingle with the holiest flame that ascends from the altar of the heart. But if we regard iniquity in our hearts, God surely will not hear us. Who sees not that it is but mockery to raise our voices to him, with hearts burning wilfully with forbidden passions, or foul with corrupt desires? Is it not an open impiety to pray for pardon, while we willingly rejoice in the pleasures of vice? to seek light and strength

from above, while resolved not to relinquish our favorite sin? and to supplicate deliverance from temptation, while not determined resolutely to avoid and resist it? Our prayers are at least vain and useless, if we do not ourselves employ the appointed means through which blessings are communicated, and put not forth our own best powers in endeavors to attain them. Why should we believe that God will grant us his gifts, when we feel not interest enough to make exertions to secure them, or believe that he will bless us for a few heartless and soon forgotten words? This indeed is the test of our sincerity. If we return from the altar of God to the world, thoughtless and indifferent as before; if we engage in its business with the same anxious eagerness; if we expose ourselves to its temptations with the same careless negligence, and think no more of the dispositions of piety we should acquire, and the lives of greater sanctity we should lead—then we may be assured that our prayers are a formal and unblest ceremony. But if, after we have prayed for pious affections, we are more anxious to maintain in our hearts the feelings of confiding and grateful love of God; if, when we have prayed for purity, we are more vigilant in guarding our hearts and resisting our daily temptations; if, when we have commended our fellow beings to our Father in heaven, we are more charitable in our temper and more active and earnest in our endeavors to do them good; if, when we have humbly sought for the light of God's wisdom and

the strength of his grace, we are more determined and resolute in obeying his laws; then, indeed, our prayers have risen in acceptance, and his favor will descend and bless us.

In the next place, our prayers to be rightly performed, must be sincerely fervent. Surely, if at any time our feelings should be strongly awakened, it is when we go to express to God our thankfulness for his goodness and our sorrow for our sins. If at any time we need sincerity and earnestness, it is when we go to seek for blessings, without which we should be miserable. How entirely are we every moment dependant on the care and sustained by the immediate providence of God! Where are the blessings which he has not given us? What are the hopes which can be accomplished without his succor? And what would be our condition, should he for a moment cease to remember or to protect us? How infinite is that condescension which amid the vastness of a dependent universe, overlooks not even us; provides for our least wants, supplies even our daily food, and adds those incessantly renewed enjoyments, too trifling almost to be singly named, but which are rendering life to us a state of peace and happiness! And ought not such a benefactor to be remembered and thanked with fervent affections? But go further—think how constantly we are forgetful of all his kindness, careless of his commands and disobedient to his parental authority! With what coldness do we receive the expressions of

his mercy; with what numberless sins and follies have we rendered ourselves unworthy of his notice, and how little care we to deserve or to attain his favor! And when he hath opened before us his heavenly kingdom—when he hath called us but to render him the return of our poor obedience, and to keep ourselves unspotted from earthly guilt, in order that his mercy might eternally bless us—we, notwithstanding, are rendering this world of trial the great object of our love, the end of our hopes, the occupier of our strongest interests, and make but few, feeble, inconstant exertions to prepare for a kingdom eternal in the heavens! Surely, when we have so much to think on with shame and sorrow, and so much to be forgiven, our expressions of penitence and our prayers for pardon should be sincere and fervent. And should his forgiveness be withheld, and his long provoked forbearance cease, and the season of his patience be past, and the aids of his spirit be withheld, and no gifts of grace be granted to sustain and succor us in this world of danger, and to prepare our souls for their appearance before our Judge—where should we appear at the great day of account! Yet these blessings are promised only in answer to our prayers. When so much is dependent on them, ought not they to be sincere and fervent?

ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

The scriptures are full of promises to prayer; yet how apt are we to limit its efficacy, and to be incredulous as to its rewards! When we are so strongly assured from the lips of Christ, "whatsoever ye would ask in prayer, believe that ye shall receive it, and it shall be given unto you;"—why should we not trust in the promise, and believe that every sincere prayer meets its blessed recompense? We are ever to pray with humble resignation to God's will, and to implore that the evils we may in ignorance desire, his mercy will withhold, and that all needed good he will bestow, though it should be unasked. We may not then always know in what manner our prayers are rewarded. But experience does indeed often prove the truth of the promise, and many a pious suppliant has seen it fulfilled in outward deliverances and temporal blessings, in which the hand of God was manifest, and which he might, in reason as well as faith, recognise as the returns of prayer. And what Christian has not felt that the influences of a holier spirit have oftentimes rewarded his prayer; or he has found a strength imparted in trials under which nature was ready to sink; a peace ministered in affliction, which the world could not bestow; and a change of feelings and views wrought in his heart, which his own exertions, unaided and unblest of God, would fail to have accomplished?

God is, indeed, unspeakably more merciful, his

agency is far more intimate and constant in us and over us, our connexion with him is far more direct and immediate, than we are ready to believe. We rather dispute his goodness, and hesitate to trust his promises, than simply try to experience their truth. Let us dismiss this cold incredulity, and act upon his declarations of mercy, and ask, for we shall surely receive, and seek, for we indeed shall find. It may be that our prayers are not answered, as our short-sighted wishes would dictate, and return not to us in goods of this world. It may be that, though we pray in earnestness, many present blessings will be withheld. But our prayers will not be in vain. They will be rewarded with what infinitely outweighs all earthly blessings—with the improvement of our own religious characters, and with God's eternal favor.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

I PROCEED to some general remarks on the obligations and duties connected with the ordinance we are now to celebrate. The first duty evidently is, sincerely to exert ourselves that the rite, while we share it, may have that influence on our feelings and conduct which it was designed and is fitted to have. We must ever consider it not as an end, but as a means; not as merely an outward profession, but as a new ground of obligations, a new source of motives, strength and

hopes. It will exert upon our characters no mysterious and unintelligible influence. These simple elements, these words of prayer, have no charm to advance our spiritual improvement. An external participation is at best useless, if partaken with a careless and inattentive mind—if unattended with our own secret prayers and endeavors to render it impressive and affecting. Without these, it may prove injurious by weakening our religious sensibility, or by secretly leading us to rest in a mere outward form, as a compensation for the deficiency of real purity and holiness of character.

The effect of this rite upon us arises only from the disposition with which we celebrate it, and from the feelings which it awakens or invigorates. When we celebrate it because we feel it to be a duty, in compliance with the command of Jesus, and as a profession of our Christian faith, it gives new firmness and power to the principles of obedience. When we here in sincerity acknowledge Jesus Christ as our instructer and Lord, we cannot but feel something of our obligation to live as his followers. When, as we partake of these memorials, we remember the infinite goodness of God towards us, the inexpressible love of him who was the brightness of his Father's glory, the pains, and labors, and sorrows of his life, and his death of shame and agony, and, from these earthly symbols, raise our eyes to that world of glory, which he has opened before us; how high and vast appear our

obligations to devote to God and his Son the little service of our weak affections, and poor obedience! Who can do this, and not feel some sorrow for his own unworthiness, and some emotion of gratitude for these unspeakable mercies? It is by having these views given, and these feelings awakened, that our faith is rendered more strong and operative, our trust in God, and love of Christ, and hopes of immortality are quickened and animated, and our good resolutions confirmed; and we can return again to the world, bearing with us nobler views of our destination, with hearts softened to good impressions, and better fitted to sustain the trials and discharge the duties of life. It is in this simple though powerful manner, that this christian rite tends to our spiritual improvement. The first duty then, which arises to communicants, is, to open their minds to these impressions,—to endeavor to awaken and strengthen these affections, in order that this means of grace may exert upon their characters its purifying and hallowing influences.

The second duty is, to feel and act consistently with those views which this rite imposes upon us. We must strive to bear habitually on our minds a sense of that relation to Jesus Christ, which here we humbly rejoice to acknowledge. The affections which here are kindled, the purposes which here we form, the hopes which here are guided to a better world, are not to vanish away when the service at the altar is ended. We gather round the table, not only in obedience to

a command, but to gain strength and consolation in our christian course; and when these are gained, we are again to go on our way, with new zeal and joy.

When we have returned to our homes, to other duties and to other joys, the spirit we have breathed at the altar should be diffused over all our feelings, and consecrate all our actions. The Lord's Supper is established, not only as a mode of expressing our grateful regard to him, but also as one important means of spiritual improvement. Let us not then forget that we are responsible for its right use, and for giving to it its proper influence upon our hearts and conduct. Every privilege is given to be improved; every means of grace, to render us wiser and better. And in proportion to the advantages we enjoy, will be the account we are to render to God. If this ordinance does not improve our characters, does not render us more pure, benevolent and holy in our common lives; if its influence is limited to the walls of the temple and the hour of its celebration; if it fail to render us more watchful over ourselves, more strenuous and earnest in the ways of obedience;—we then are guilty of an abuse of our high privilege, and our enjoyment of it will only aggravate our folly and sin.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THERE are many who are kept from the table of the Lord by unworthy views of its nature and design. To them there is something awful and mysterious in this simple and affecting memorial of the most affectionate of friends. But dismiss from your minds the explanations which men have given, and listen only to the words in which Jesus instituted the ordinance, and in which Paul enjoined it on his converts, and the appalling gloom will vanish. You will see it instituted simply as a means to bring our Saviour to our remembrance, to present him before us in the most interesting light, as about to suffer and to die for us, and to awaken the affections which this scene should inspire. This is the only view which the scriptures present of the Lord's supper; and how many and powerful are the motives which should persuade us cheerfully and gratefully to observe it.

There are others who fear to approach the table of the Lord, from feelings of their own unworthiness, and from thinking a peculiar sanctity of heart, and a high degree of perfection required to fit them worthily to partake. It is true there is a disposition of heart required; but this disposition is no other than those humble, grateful, and penitent affections, with which we should enter these walls and address our prayers to God. The scriptures no where demand a peculiar de-

gree of preparation for this ordinance. It requires, and it does only require, that we receive Jesus in the character in which he is presented in the gospel;—that we believe him sent from God to be our teacher and redeemer, and that we sincerely desire and purpose to obey his gospel. When you find these dispositions in yourselves, it is most surely your duty to come to the altar. Think you that with these feelings Christ will reject you? Think you that he, who has been willing to die for your sakes, now forbids you to express to him your gratitude and affection, or desires you to turn away from the rite, which himself has instituted to animate your remembrance of him?

There are yet others, who will not comply with this institution from supposing it imposes more strong and solemn obligations to a holy life. But are you not equally obliged to be holy whether you partake of this christian ordinance or not? Where will you find a declaration in the gospel dispensing with that strict obedience from you, which it requires of us? No, my friends, all are under equal obligation to live a life devoted to God; and they who join in these christian rites, have a motive to urge them, a means to enable them better to discharge this high obligation, which they who refuse their compliance with these institutions do not enjoy. Besides, there is a consideration, whose force you surely should well weigh. He who is sincerely resolved to do his duty and live up to the

requirements of the gospel, is willing to feel bound to it as strongly as possible. Is there not then reason to fear for your religious sincerity, when, from such a motive, you refuse openly to profess your belief, and to obey the explicit commands of Christ?

INTEREST OF CHRISTIANS IN EACH OTHER.

WHERE the influence of the gospel has been felt, we know what character it has produced, and how peculiar the feelings and hopes it excites. And we cannot ourselves have experienced those feelings of piety, those desires of spiritual excellence, and those aspirations after heaven, which Christianity breathes into her followers, without being awakened to a sympathising affection towards those whose hearts she has sanctified equally with our own. When travellers of the same country meet in a distant land, how peculiar and affectionate the interest which each feels in the other! To Christians, earth is but a pilgrimage, and heaven is their home. All now are encompassed with temptation and beset with danger, all are tried with the same discouragements, are saddened by the same sorrows, cheered by the same hopes and joys, and are hastening fast to lie down together in the tomb. Ought not this to excite a more affectionate interest in those to whom we are bound by the ties of our common condition and one common destiny? Besides,

when Christianity teaches us that to us there is but one Lord, ought we not to recognise all as brethren? When we are taught that God is equally interested in the welfare of all his children, how can we regard them with coldness and jealousy? When Christ hath been willing to die, for them, as well as for us, shall we feel that they have no claim on our kindness? And when we look forward together to that world where all the redeemed shall be gathered in peace, ought we not to strive to cherish on earth something of that mutual affection which we trust will animate us there?

TRUE AND FALSE ZEAL.

Another instance of self-deception and mistake of the nature and requirement of religion, is seen in those, who, without any peculiar holiness of life, are filled with unregulated zeal and with great professions. Many persons of this character, from the great desire and constant effort to seem exemplary Christians in the eyes of men, at last persuade themselves that they are in fact what they are desirous of appearing to be, even though many of the plain moral duties are neglected, and that charity which "thinketh no evil," and that piety which is evinced in ordinary life, are strangely wanting. So far as high pretensions go, it is to be remarked, that true religion is quiet, unpretending, and humble, perva-

ding with silent influence the heart and life, and manifesting its sincerity and power, not by profession, but by the effects which it produces, in the permanent fruits of a holy conversation.

We cannot have too much zeal in the concerns of religion, if it be founded in knowledge, attended with charity, and directed with sober wisdom to a worthy end. But experience proves that there is a false zeal, an unhallowed fire, kindled and fed with the fierceness of earthly passions, and which burns but to destroy. This false zeal is often a mere modification of party spirit, and is attended with all its baleful consequences; or it arises from the love of distinction and of power. Would you know its effects? You see them in the spiritual pride it generates, in the acrimony and bitterness it breathes into the temper, in the uncharitable judgments and hard speeches which it prompts towards all those who meet not its wishes, who dissent from its views, or oppose its designs. Surely no outward veil of sanctity can consecrate those passions, which war with the meekness and gentleness of Christianity. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and if our zeal destroy our benevolence, it is very certain that it has not its root in religion. However much it may gain the praise of men, it has no value in the sight of God.

The only zeal which we can regard as evincing sincerity and earnestness in religion, is of a very different nature. It derives its origin from a deep

conviction of the inexpressible importance of the christian character in ourselves and in others. It will be first directed to the improvement of our own hearts and lives, and it then will strive to promote more widely the influence of religion, to enlighten the consciences, reclaim the wanderings, strengthen the principles, and quicken the pious feelings of all within its reach. It is too humble, to seek applause; too full of charity, to indulge in severe judgments, or unkind remarks, however it may pity the defects it witnesses, or may mourn over the perverseness of others. When a zeal, rational, benevolent, and consistent, like this, animates and rules us, we then indeed may hope for the divine acceptance; and if we want this, or if our zeal be of a different nature, it is certain, that whatever our pretensions may be, our christian characters are either deficient in some of their most essential graces, or are feeble and imperfect in all.

FALSE AND TRUE HUMILITY.

The humility of the gospel is often confounded with other qualities. It is often supposed to imply a mean and debasing opinion of ourselves, particularly of our own intellectual and moral capacities and powers. But this it by no means implies. This is a great weakness, and is often extremely injurious to the character. It destroys

all self-respect and confidence in ourselves, and leads to irresolution, weak and wavering exertion, dejected indolence, and frequent neglects of duty. Besides, it would not always be true; and we are nowhere required to judge falsely of ourselves. God has granted us powers and advantages;—ought we not fairly to estimate them, that we may be more sensible of the extent of our obligations, and suitably grateful for all his gifts, and may cheerfully employ them to the end for which they were given? There is surely no humility in believing ourselves unable to do what God has given us the ability to do; there is none in believing that, from the weakness or corruption of nature, we cannot yield to him that religious obedience, which our own consciences and all the declarations and exhortations of his word teach us that we are capable of yielding.

Nor does a Christian humility require us to debase ourselves below the truth with regard to our characters. The contemplation of virtue and excellence, in whatever degree and wherever it be found, must ever be attended with pleasure to an intelligent and moral being. If the Christian be conscious of it in himself, why should he not view it with complacency and joy? It is the voice of God which speaks in the whispers of conscience. There is a pure feeling of self-approbation, which as an earthly reward is inseparably connected with virtue. The humility of the gospel does not require this feeling to be stifled and extinguished; it does not require of

him to shut out from his bosom every ray of that peace with which God visits the pure in heart. It only demands it to be sober, rational, and true; that the approbation we pay to ourselves, should be measured by that which we yield to the same degree of virtue in others; that it should be tempered with modesty, and mingled with sorrow for our numberless imperfections and sins. In conformity to this, we find the apostles speaking of themselves in terms of conscious rectitude and self-approbation, and sometimes even proposing their own conduct as an example to their converts. This they certainly would not have done, did the humility which they inculcated demand a mean and degrading estimation of their own characters, or did it require us to despise the little advances which God has enabled us to make in holiness, and to humble ourselves in the dust for depravity and sin, of which our own consciences do not accuse us.

The greatest difficulty in describing the humility of the gospel arises from the necessity of giving such a representation of the nature and sources of it, as may include the humility of him who was holy, harmless, and separate from sin. The views from which the humility of our Saviour arose form part of the sources of that of his disciples.

The first source of Christian humility is a deep sense and devout veneration of the perfections of God. Let the mind once be impressed with the divine character; let the heart feel the full con-

viction of its awful majesty; let the soul once be conscious of the immediate presence of the infinite and eternal God; and you could not but be humble. There is something in the contemplation of any high degree of purity and sanctity, which awakens in every good mind, a feeling of awe and loveliness; and how greatly should it be awakened in the contemplation of perfect, unchangeable, inconceivable holiness! When with this you consider God as ever present with you, more intimately connected with you than any other being can be; when everything around you manifests his constant and immediate agency, and teaches that all which you think, and purpose, and do, is open to his sight; who is there who can think of himself with arrogance and pride? It is in the contemplation of these perfections, so awful and so amiable, that the Christian forgets himself, and cannot but lie low at his footstool; and it is this which forms a great part of the humility of the gospel. * * *

There is another view which enters into the formation of a truly humble disposition; I mean the considering all our advantages and blessings as the gifts of God. The great source of pride, is the comparing of our own situation with that of others, and forgetting who it is that "made us to differ." But what have we that we did not receive? Who gave you faculties and strength to contrive and labor, and granted success to your endeavors? Whose winds returned your ships laden with wealth? Who sent the

influences of the heavens upon your cultivated lands, and caused the buds to swell and the fruits to ripen? Who gave your children, and reared them to maturity through weakness and danger? Who gave you that beauty of person, that power of intellect, those means of improvement? Is it not God alone, who opens to us every source of prosperity, and gives every privilege and enjoyment? He withholds them from others for their trial and discipline, as he gives them to us for ours. A Christian thus is led to view all his superiority of situation as the gift of God, and to regard all the circumstances of it, not as grounds of self-gratulation, not as the rewards of his merit, but as allotted him as the means of his probation, and for whose right use he is solemnly accountable.

Another source of christian humility arises from just and benevolent views of mankind. This was a great source of the humility of Christ. It was this which made him willing to relinquish his own happiness, and neglect the glory he had with the Father, and humble himself to the form of a servant, and enter our world of sorrow and sin. The same spirit is to influence his followers. We are ever to remember how noble is the nature, how vast the capacity of moral improvement and happiness, with which every human being is endowed. However sunk in misery, bowed down in want, loathsome in disease, or degraded by guilt; we are to remember that all were created capable of endless im-

provement and of immortal glory. Bear these views with you when you go into the world, and they will produce in the cause of benevolence an oblivion of yourselves. They will free you from self-conceit, excite you to a respect of all human beings; teach you to disregard the little advantages God has given you over them, and to waive many of your own rights, and sacrifice much of your present comfort, to promote their advancement, safety, and peace. The benevolent affections thus go to form part of the humility of a Christian, as they did to form that of his great exemplar and guide.

There is one foundation of a humble disposition, which found no place in the character of Christ, but which more than all the others, is the source of a true humility in his followers; I mean a sense of our own unworthiness and sin. When, in moments of seriousness and faith, we look upward to God, and behold at the head of creation a Being possessed of every perfection which can awaken our veneration, confidence, or love; when we think of him as our Father, our preserver, the giver even of the least of our mercies, the only foundation of all that we can hope; when we recognise in every event of our lives, in every circumstance of safety and enjoyment, his gracious and beneficent care; what a powerful claim is made on our grateful and cheerful obedience! And when we remember that he confines not his goodness to earth, but has formed us and is preparing us for a holier and

nobler existence; when to this end we see the Son of his bosom entering our world, and dying for our sakes; think that he has given us a religion which directs us to every duty, has left us promises of continual aid to support us in our trials, and has opened all the glory of heaven as our eternal reward;—when we reflect on all this, how infinite appear our mercies, and how powerful our obligations to yield to God the little tribute of our affection and our obedience! But how do we discharge these obligations? Alas! we look within ourselves, and find hearts untouched by all this mercy, affections cold and languid, passions unsubdued and unhallowed, desires of holiness wavering and vain, interest wasted on the world, devotions neglected or careless, the promptings of conscience disregarded, and solemn duties forgotten or neglected. Perhaps we hardly can find one deliberate determination of devoting our lives to God; and even where such a determination has been formed, how inconstant has been its influence! How often have days and weeks passed away, on which we could reflect with scarcely any feeling but a vain regret, if not with penitence and shame! For one act of goodness, how many do we find of uselessness or sin! For one short season of holiness, how many of negligence, folly, and guilt! With our few acts of piety and benevolence, unworthy motives often have mingled, and many imperfections have defiled our best and sincerest services. Were

we conscious that any one knew us as we know ourselves, could look at once upon all the weakness, and disorder, and folly of our hearts, could recall, as we can, all the sordid motives, and low and unworthy deeds, which have deformed our lives; what reasons should we not feel for shame and humiliation! Yet God sees it all. He has watched our retirements, he has penetrated our hearts. He knows all that is foolish or guilty in our lives. It is with this sense of imperfection and sin, mingled with some sincere emotions of devout affection, some solemn purposes of holiness, some humble hopes of divine favor, that the Christian ever looks up to God; and it is from this deep and habitual sense of his unworthiness, that his humility principally arises. * * *

The natural effect of humility is to make the Christian desire better to know and to perform his duty; and this desire the grace of God enables him to fulfil. The humble in heart he gives to know, and to obey the truth. He enlightens his path, guards his frailty, helps his infirmities, aids him amidst his temptations and trials, and strengthens and animates him in his christian course. "God giveth grace to the humble." He waters him with the dews of heaven, he soothes him with the assurances of mercy, and sheds upon him an unearthly joy to cheer him in this valley of tears. Here indeed the Christian walks by faith; now he sees through a glass but darkly; and finds sorrow and heaviness mingling with hopes and joys. But to the hum-

ble, God is ever gracious. To him God delights to reveal the awful glories of his character, and brighter views of that happiness prepared for him hereafter. True, he may here be despised and scorned. True, the world may fling its contempt and scandal on his name, but he has a friend in heaven who careth for him. Though frail and imperfect, he is yet a favored object of God's notice and grace, and from the contempt and frailty of this world God will raise him to perfect purity and immortal glory—to the company of angels and the spirits of the just—to the society of patriarchs and apostles, of prophets and kings—to the friendship of Jesus Christ, and the full and eternal enjoyment of the nearer presence of God. Raise your eyes, ye children of dust, and behold the glory which awaits you in the heavens. Go on in your lives of humble penitence for sin, and lowly obedience to the will of God, and he will bless you with his peace in this world, and raise you to immortal happiness in the world to come.

SELF-DENIAL.

We ought never to forget, that most of the peculiar virtues of the gospel are modes of exercising Self-denial. What is its exalted Purity, but the mortification of the senses and appetites, and the restraints of the thoughts and desires? What

its Meekness, but a patient bearing of injuries? What its Humility, but a relinquishment of pride, ambitious wishes, and vain desires? Its noble Benevolence requires a continual forgetfulness of self; and its heavenly-mindedness is a renunciation of all worldly tempers.

The benevolence of the gospel requires a degree of self-denial. It is zealous, active, persevering, disinterested. It calls us often to waive our own rights, to relinquish private advantage, to undergo temporary inconvenience, to give our time, and employ our minds and strength, for the benefit, or improvement of others. When opportunities of doing good occur, we are to seize and improve them, though it may be at some expense of our own ease. This is my commandment, said our dying Saviour, "that ye love one another, as I have loved you." And how hath he loved us? Was it not by a whole life of voluntary poverty and unwearied exertion, and a cheerful endurance of death itself for us? If, then, in the cause of benevolence we are willing to make no sacrifice—if the spirit of christian charity is narrowed by us to the stinted measure of occasional alms—if we merely give of this world's goods, what we cannot, without shame, withhold, and contribute only what public sentiment, and the expectation of others call for—if, for the sake of improving our ability of benevolence, or for the immediate comfort or improvement of others, we are willing to retrench no useless expenses, to relinquish no superfluous in-

dulgence, to undergo no short inconvenience, to make no personal exertion,—how little have we acquired of the spirit of Jesus,—of that fervent benevolence, on which Christianity lays so great a stress!

If heavenly-mindedness be required of us, it is required as an habitual, prevalent temper; a temper, which is to be manifested, not occasionally, but in our daily conduct—which is to characterize the whole manner in which we live in the world, in which we desire and pursue its objects, and enjoy its gifts. We are to be influenced by views and feelings, as peculiar as though we belonged to a different world; pilgrims on earth, whose citizenship and home is in heaven. It is true, we must, in a degree, conform to the customs and habits of society; but, never, when we are not entirely persuaded of their obligation, or at least, of their innocence. There are many customs, in themselves innocent, which, in excess, are criminal; there are many, which to others may be harmless, but which, from the peculiarity of our own situation or character, may be injurious to us. And whatever be the occupation or amusement which renders us careless or indevout, which impairs the seriousness of our feelings or views, which needlessly wastes our time, or unfits us for sober duty, or causes us to feel less deeply the indispensable necessity of the strictest purity and holiness—whatever produces these effects, ought

resolutely to be denied, and immediately and entirely relinquished.

Our own experience of life, and the instructions of Scripture, teach us to consider this first stage of our existence, simply as a state of trial. The recompense of obedience is not promised to us in this world. So far, indeed, as we make the sacrifices and exertions which the gospel demands, it visits us with a "peace which the world cannot give;" but it is in the blessedness of a heavenly kingdom, that we must look for our full reward. But when the gospel is thus distinct in representing the christian life and the preparation for heaven, as requiring continual watchfulness and exertion, it surely becomes us to inquire how far our own conduct conforms to these views. We are called "to strive with earnestness to enter the straight gate, for many will seek to enter, and will not be able." Are we striving to enter, when we impose no restraints on ourselves, gratify all our wishes, and give up life to a regular, but almost exclusive pursuit of the business and advantages of the world? Are we working out our salvation with fear and trembling, when our great object is to pass life pleasantly away, when we make its accommodations and comforts the principal objects of our concern, and the attainment of the christian character, though not entirely unthought of, is, in fact, entirely subordinate? "Straight is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Can we suppose ourselves among

that few, unless our religious exertions are careful, solicitous, incessant? Our whole tendency is to feel too little the necessity of watchfulness, self-restraint, and labor,—to be too insensible how extremely high are the requirements of the gospel. We cannot do too much; and we may fail at last of salvation, not because we were utterly careless, not because we made no exertions, but because those exertions were feeble, broken, and wavering,—because we did not strive with that earnestness, that zeal, that anxious and unwearied vigilance and effort, without which the christian character can never be attained.

DANGERS FROM WITHIN TO BE GUARDED AGAINST.

Besides the dangers which arise from without, there are dangers from within. Of these, I can mention but two. The first is, that there is a tendency within us to negligence and sloth. In the concerns of religion, we are continually urged to procrastinate our duties; to seek excuses for consulting our ease; to rest contented with idle wishes; to compromise for our neglect, by forming fruitless resolutions; or to find in those external observances which cost us little, a substitute for the earnest piety and practical godliness, which demand constant vigilance and persevering labor. Most of what we term sins of infirmity, are indeed sins of carelessness, and arise, not

from the weakness of nature, but from neglect of attention, of watchfulness, or of proper exertion. The christian character is one of progress,—of improvement. Its qualities are not like human knowledge, which, when once acquired, will, with very little effort, remain with us. We cannot for a time neglect the cultivation of our hearts, or the regulation of our lives, and return after long neglect and find them as they once were. We must watch over them, and spend our exertions upon them, with unwearied patience and persevering resolution, or we rapidly shall sink from the height we have gained. While we slumber, our lamps will grow dim. Whenever we consult our ease, whenever the vigor of our exertions is weakened, the religious character will decay. We may perceive, indeed, no sudden change, no alarming deficiency; but our progress will be like the decline of the day; the light of life will gradually withdraw itself,—the shades of night will silently deepen over us, and melt imperceptibly into each other, till nothing at last remain, but coldness, darkness, and gloom.

The other danger is, that which arises from some peculiar evil propensity. No one, who reflects on his own character, can avoid being conscious, that there is a sin which most easily besets him, which, in spite of all his exertions, is continually rising up to trouble him. We are in peculiar danger from this source, not only because it is so deeply seated, because it operates so secretly and powerfully, and because it is so difficult to con-

quer; but also because, in the very point at which we are most weak and assailable, our conscience and moral judgments are most apt to be blinded. Where our peculiar sin is concerned, we are apt to interpret the requirements of the gospel in a lax and indulgent manner; to imagine that while in other points we strive to be faithful, our neglect in this single case, is pardonable. But, in truth, this propensity, whatever it be, is our peculiar trial; it is the very case in which our vigilance and exertion are most important, and by which the sincerity of our christian character is principally to be tested. We ought, then, to strive with the greatest earnestness to conquer the sin which thus besets us; to avoid, with peculiar care, whatever may tend to inflame and strengthen it; and to exercise a resolute self-denial as to many indulgences, which those around us, who have not the same disposition, may partake without danger.

DANGER OF HABITUAL INDULGENCE IN ONE SIN.

It is utterly impossible to indulge habitually in any one sin, and to maintain the purity and elevation of the christian character in other respects. Some sins, intemperance, covetousness, or slander, for instance, cannot be retained without the violation of many connected duties, and involve directly the commission of other offences. And in all cases, the wilful indulgence of any one sin necessarily weakens the religious principle,

loosens its control, and renders it less influential in the time of temptation. The conscience which has grown hardened in one habit of wilful vice, speaks with less force, and is silenced with more ease, when our wishes urge us to other sins. The indulgence of any one sin is also destructive to the feelings of pure and unaffected devotion. We cannot approach the Being with confidence and love, whose commands we are conscious of habitually violating. Our homage may indeed be exactly rendered; but it will be formal, constrained, and mingled with remorse and apprehension; it will have nothing of that filial and heartfelt confidence, that cheerful glow, that unreserved simplicity of feeling, which renders the affections of piety acceptable to God. The inconsistency between profession and practice will be too painfully felt to be long endured; and either the sin must be relinquished, or every pure feeling and habit of piety be given up. No man can serve two masters.

We are to estimate our religious condition, less by outward conduct, than by the sincerity of our christian disposition, and the strength of our christian principles. The willingness to indulge in any one sin, indicates a want of soundness and purity in both. It shows that we have not even the sincere intention to live up to the full strictness of the christian requirements. It evinces that we do not even endeavor to attain a perfect christian character. It proves that our principles of religion are not so strong as our propensity to

sin. Where this is the case, surely we can have little pretension to christian sincerity. The same weakness of religious principle which permits you to transgress in one instance, where inclination or interest invite, would equally permit you to transgress in any other instance, were the temptation the same. So that your innocence in other respects is owing, not to a sense of religion, not to the power of faith and principle, not to your desire of the favor of God,—but to the absence of temptation, the want of inclination, and of opportunity.

We are exceedingly apt to pacify ourselves by exaggerations of the infirmity of our nature, and an unjustifiable reliance on the mercy of God. It is true, human nature is infirm, and temptation is abundant, and the christian standard is strict and high. But has God overlooked our frailty? Are not his commands addressed to us as infirm and imperfect beings? And if nature be too weak to fulfil them, has he not promised us an aid, which, in every hour of trial, is sufficient for us? Are the privileges and promises of the gospel nothing? Has not experience proved how nearly the requisitions of Christianity may be met, by the example of those who have fought their fight, and now inherit their crown? All the perfection which God requires, is the perfection of our sincere intentions, of our best endeavors to fulfil all his will; and his mercy is promised only to our unavoidable imperfections. The truth is, we most often continue in sin, not from the weakness

of our nature, but because we are not willing, we do not intend, we do not endeavor, to become strictly and universally holy. Many persons conceive their failure in some one respect to be quite pardonable, from imagining that there is some peculiar and irresistible violence in their own propensities and temptations. This is a perfect delusion. No man can lay his hand on his heart, and say in the presence of God, that his temptations to any sin are invincible. Every one's conscience distinctly tells him, by its warnings and reproaches, that he might resist and conquer if he would. Thousands are subject to our temptations, who habitually overcome them. We have the same means, and motives, and promised aid; and if we fail in the struggle, the guilt is our own. We ourselves sometimes overcome our temptations. To do it, therefore, is at all times in our power. Temptations prove too strong for our virtue, by our negligence, by not watching against their approach, not avoiding the occasions, and not checking the first desires to sin; we ourselves give them their strength by frequently provoking, and habitually indulging them. And where this is the case, strength of temptation, however overwhelming, is no apology for sin.

ENCOURAGEMENT IN RELIGIOUS WEAKNESS.

When we think of our moral weakness, the strength of our passions, and the power of those sins which most easily beset us; when we reflect on our dangers from without, the obstacles that impede, and the temptations that try us; when we remember how often our best resolutions have failed, and how easily they may fail again; when we see others, whose virtue and piety once seemed most secure, sinking in the day of trial, and think how distressful the temptations to which we too may soon be called; when we then think what heaven is, and how much must be done to fit us for its attainment; the heart of the sincerest is ready to sink in fear and sadness. We feel our own insecurity and exposure, and look forward with anxiety. We feel the need of protection from above, of a strength which is not our own. And here the gospel meets us with encouragement and peace. It assures us of an aid which will ever be sufficient for us, which will sustain the weakness of nature, and give to our exertions a victory. And it calls us to rely on that merciful Being, who "remembers whereof we are made," and pities our infirmity; who will bring us to no trial without furnishing us with strength; who beholds with joy the advances we make in virtue, and will reward us at last, not according to the perfection of our obedience, but the sincerity of our endeavors.

THE BONDAGE OF SIN.

We must perceive sin to be a bondage, when we consider how incessant, oppressive, and lawless is its power. He is surely not free, who cannot govern himself, who cannot do what he sees and feels to be right; and he is surely most free, who can calmly judge, decide, and act as his reason dictates, undeceived by false expectations or fears, governed by no wrong prejudice, and driven forward by no furious passion. The bondage of the sinner lies in his being the unresisting slave of his passions and appetites, and his inability to govern himself by conscience and reason. It is an excessive indulgence, and an unresisting compliance with these, which form the habit of guilt, and degrade, and bow him to misery. Every new gratification is adding strength and vigor to propensities, which he feels will one day sink him in ruin; yet restrain them, he cannot; he is at the mercy of every temptation, and is lashed onward to destruction by an iron hand, which he groans in vain for the power to resist. How often do we see habits of sin acquiring a power, which all the warnings of reason, all the reproaches of conscience, all the horrors of remorse, cannot withstand! You have doubtless seen the struggles of an intemperate man to burst away from the chains which his appetite has imposed, striving for a time with tears, and then rushing with frenzied violence to an indulgence, which sinks him below the brute,

and leaves him to awake from his feverish dreams, only to the anguish of unavailing penitence. You have seen a man of revengeful or passionate temper hurried on to deeds of violence, violating every tie of principle and affection, and surrounding himself with a ruin, which, when his rage has subsided, he has contemplated with an agony which cannot be expressed. You have seen in numberless habits of vice, the wretched victim, mourning in dust and ashes over his transgressions, sighing to return to innocence, resolving in the bitterness of his soul, never again to offend;—yet yielding to the first approach of temptation, and rushing to misery, which he sees is surely and swiftly approaching. "O, wretched man that I am," said an apostle, when writing in the character of one bound to sin,—"who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" The maxims of the world can offer little to restrain, while the hope of security or concealment continues; and when this is gone, the sense of shame can weigh little against the charm of temptation, and the violence of passions which have long been indulged. It is some deep feeling of religion—it is the gospel of Christ, with its glorious sanctions and its proffered aid,—which alone can break these yokes of bondage, and let the oppressed go free. This is the slavery of sin; and from this, the truth will set the sinner free.

THE PLEASURES OF SIN.

A LIFE of worldly pleasure, is a life of restlessness and anxiety. Men tire of pleasure, but they know not where to end. They soon resort to it not from love, but from a habit which it is too painful to resist; or to be saved from a languid weariness of life, or the torment of reflection, and the reproaches of conscience. Yet they look forward to it with a restless desire, which only serves to embitter their present state, to fill them with uneasiness, and drive from them all serenity and peace: and they can look back upon it only with sorrow and remorse. It is in this constant restlessness, this weariness of life, this disgust at every moderate enjoyment, and all peaceful happiness—these perpetual cravings of passions and appetites, and the utter insufficiency of pleasure to communicate satisfaction and lasting joy—that you may discern the beginnings of the bondage and misery of a life of sinful pleasure.

But what we have seen is but the fair side of a worldly life. You see in its effects yet more of its misery. You read it in that haggard countenance—that emaciated and sinking frame—that loathsome train of disease and want—and all those numberless forms of wretchedness which guilt has created. And is this all? O that I could open to you the recesses of the soul—that I could show you the bitter regret with which a life of sin is remembered, and the ragings of a wound-

ed conscience—that I could carry you to the bed of death, and show you the horrible anguish which rends the soul that stands trembling on the brink of the grave, and can look up only to an offended God, and forward only to the gulf of blackness and despair. Such are the lives, and such the death of thousands. Such is the wretchedness to which the pleasures of sin will reduce you.

The bondage of sin is not merely found in what is termed a life of pleasure. You may see it in every form in which guilt may array itself;—in all the anxieties, and cravings, and wants of the avaricious, whom no heaps of treasure or extent of possessions can satisfy; in that proud and haughty spirit which cuts itself off from all the happiness of sympathy and kindness, and can look around only with envy, scorn and jealousy; in that narrow and degrading selfishness, which finds no enjoyment in the happiness of others, and is the source of every evil and tormenting feeling. God has so constituted us, that no bad feelings can give us happiness. They all bring with them their attendant suffering, and all tend to prevent that enjoyment which might flow from the objects of happiness about us. Can you find any enjoyment in the indulgence of malice, in the gnawings of envy and jealousy, in the murmurs of impatience, and the groans of discontent, and the fury of anger or revenge? In the indulgence of these, who can find peace and joy? Who can find delight in recalling them to his re

membrance? Yet these are the passions of sin; these are the feelings which men choose to indulge, rather than bow to the influence of the gospel, and seek a satisfying and enduring happiness in the paths of holiness and peace.

From all the burdens and miseries of sin "the truth will make you free." It enjoins indeed restraint; but it is of passions, whose excess would bring only suffering. It demands self-denial; but it is of pleasures which would render you wretched. It demands your body and soul to be devoted to God; and without it you can be happy neither here nor hereafter. It will form in the heart every pure and elevated feeling; it will lead to the maintenance of no temper, which will not render you more happy, will not give new delight to every innocent enjoyment, and open to far nobler sources of felicity than the earth can offer you. Its great aim is to form you to the spirit of heaven; to make you like to the angels of God; and when it does this, it ministers something of that happiness which perfected spirits enjoy.

GOVERNMENT OF THE TEMPER.

In the first place, an ungoverned temper is a perpetual source of self-torment. No feelings are in themselves more painful than the excitements of anger. All happy emotions, all which produce cheerfulness and contentment, are scat-

tered at once, and repinings, impulses of revenge, and malice, take their place. Ask your own heart, or appeal to the experience of those whose tempers are unhappy, and know how great is the suffering in the violence of ungoverned anger. Observe the countenance of one excited in passion. What a frightful picture of tumultuous misery it exhibits? And when the swellings of rage are past, what feelings of shame, and self-degradation and regret, if not of horror and remorse, sink every ingenuous and well-principled mind in bitter sorrow!

A bad temper destroys the capacity of receiving enjoyment from objects otherwise suited to impart it. A peevish, irritated, sullen spirit, can see nothing in a pleasurable light. Vexed and sore itself, it finds fault with everything around it, and nothing can approach it without wounding and exasperating. It is only a mind tranquil and at ease, which can find delight in the means of happiness, with which, by God's goodness, it is surrounded. The happiest life always has many slight inconveniences; an irritable temper bears them with difficulty; and those minor troubles, which give no uneasiness to a well-governed mind, perpetually harass and wear upon its spirit, and destroy its comfort.

Our peace will always be much affected by the conduct of those around us; and it is important to our comfort, to acquire the power of passing along with ease through the competitions and conflicting interests of the world; to

acquire that habit of self-command, and of independence on others for sources of self-satisfaction, which shall preserve us from being wounded or vexed at their interferences, neglects, or impudence, or their unintentional rude remarks. An irritable or morose temper will be wanting in all this; will feel to the quick everything that is disagreeable, and be entirely at the mercy of every one who is willing to wound and goad it. You find many in society who are ready to take advantage of such a spirit, and enjoy a malicious pleasure in playing upon the feelings of a bad tempered man. In the characteristic description of the wise man, "he is like a city that is broken down and without walls," defenceless against any violent attack, and exposed to the ravages of all who choose to lay it waste. So that if you would avoid most of the vexations, arising from the general intercourse of society, you must acquire a command of temper.

2. But beside the suffering which an ungoverned temper brings to one's self, who knows not how constant and how severe the misery which it causes to others. It disturbs conversation with perpetual rudeness and indecency, and, breaking out in reproachful expressions and acts of unkindness, renders the situation, not merely of those who offend, but of all around, uncomfortable. Looking into any family where one violent temper is permitted to rage uncontrolled, and what discords, contention and uproar it is constantly producing! Or observe the perpetual

weariness, disgust, and vexation, which a peevish spirit causes. Follow a bad tempered man through his daily intercourse with society, and in his connexions of business. What inconvenience and irritation he brings to all with whom he is associated, what quarrels and animosities follow his steps, and with how much difficulty and how many interruptions are you able to keep up any habits of intimacy and friendship! How many too are the bitter contentions, the clamor and profaneness, the breaking of long established friendships, the acts of violence and outrage, to which in a moment of frenzy he is driven! A man inflamed with passion, is in a species of the wildest derangement. You see him incapable of reasoning, blind to consequences, and often spreading in his rage a ruin around him, which, when the season of madness is past, he contemplates in an agony of shame and remorse. However just and benevolent he may be during the repose of passion, there is no security to such a man, against the most violent and criminal deeds.

3. There is another and far more important view, in which the duty of governing the temper is manifest. The indulgence of a bad temper is entirely at war with the precepts of the gospel, and with the spirit of the christian character. No disposition is more constantly or more urgently enjoined, than that of a gentle and meek forbearance. It was the disposition which our Saviour peculiarly illustrated in his own charac-

ter, and called his disciples to imitate. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." The New Testament is full of exhortations like these: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from among you; and be ye kind, tender hearted, forbearing and forgiving one another, even as God through Jesus Christ, has forgiven you." "Recompence to no man evil for evil." "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you." What can be more directly opposite, to both the letter and the spirit of these injunctions, than the indulgence of a bad temper! There is another passage pointed directly and with great force, against an ungoverned temper; than which, indeed, nothing can be more explicit or more solemn. "I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say unto him, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say unto him, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." In this passage our Saviour condemns the first impulse of a causeless anger; and against that anger which vents itself in reproaches and abuse, denounces an awful judgment. And who is there whose temper is uncontrolled, that stands not guilty and condemned by the precept? Do not therefore consider this defect of character, however common, as a trifling and venial imperfection.

A bad temper is also inconsistent with many of

the best graces of the christian character. How can you imagine yourself possessed of a Christian Humility, if you cannot bear trifling affronts, inconveniences or disappointments, with patient forbearance? Where is your Charity, if a careless expression, or an unintended neglect, or an insignificant injury, can rouse you instantly to wrath? How little have you of that fervent and reverent love of God, that love which should still the wildness of every passion, and breathe a calm and holy spirit into the soul of the devout—if every hour of the day is stained with some expression of sullen or irritated impatience? Do not delude yourself by imagining that you have made any important acquisition of the christian spirit, if you are wilfully wanting in the control of your temper; if you yet indulge, without endeavoring to conquer them, habits so criminal in themselves, and so utterly inconsistent with the leading dispositions of the meek and merciful religion of Christ.

If the command of temper be so important, what are the means by which it may be accomplished?

There are some who impose on their own consciences, by persuading themselves that the control of their tempers is impossible. It is indeed difficult, very difficult, and to be acquired only by constant watchfulness, great resolution, and persevering efforts. Irritability seems to be the temper which is governed with the most difficulty; but this is surely not impossible. The

most irritable man can always control himself, when in presence of one whom he regards with fear or respect, or whose favor or affection he is desirous to conciliate. How often too have we seen the irritability of youth subdued, in the progress of years, to mildness and meek forbearance. Early habits of self-control in this respect, are peculiarly important; for no fault of character becomes more hardened by indulgence. We often indeed witness in the tempers of the aged, a melancholy proof of human weakness. The passions survive the intellect, and continue wildly to blaze when the energies of the mind are fled, and the worn and exhausted frame is sinking into dust.

If you would acquire an habitual command of temper, it is important often to consider your dangers, to recollect what are the occasions on which you are most easily excited, to avoid them when possible, or to guard yourself by previous reflection and resolutions, when exposure to excitement is necessary or expected. The great means of self-control is to subdue the first motions of irritability, moroseness, or obstinacy; for always in proportion as you indulge them at first, do they become difficult or impossible to be restrained. Nothing tends so much to exasperate the temper, as permitting yourself to brood over the circumstances or objects which first excited it. Make an effort, therefore, when your temper is kindling, to turn your attention from the subject, and engage your mind upon something

remote from the cause of irritation. You may in every case recollect, if you endeavor to do it, some circumstances of mitigation. If it be some accidental inconvenience which vexes you, it might have been far more vexatious or severe, and some advantages you can find to result from every disappointment and evil. If another has offended you, perhaps the offence was provoked, and why will you blame him? or if it were wanton, will you not pity the weakness or the vice of him who is willing to inflict it? Is there no point of his character which you can contemplate with respect and approbation? Is there no benefit you have received from him, which then should rise to your remembrance? If no view like this can soothe you, yet remember him as frail, exposed, and soon to die. How rapidly are you, and all who injure and all who bless you, passing away, and how soon shall you all sleep peacefully together in the dust!

It is very important, if you would acquire an habitual control of temper, to restrain resolutely all expression of it when irritated. The expression of any disposition always gives it strength; your temper is not soothed, but its power is much increased, by giving it vent in reproachful words or injurious retaliations. Guard, then, your tongue and your hands when the foul spirit is rising in its strength; and by first acquiring the power of restraining its expressions, you will soon be able to control the temper which prompts them.

There is one consideration which will always tend to soothe you. When others offend you, consider how often you may have wounded them, and how much you need their forbearance and pardon. And above all, consider in what need you ever stand of the forgiveness of God. Let that solemn declaration of our Saviour come home to your mind: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." Remember what you have implored of God when you have prayed; "Forgive me my debts, as I forgive my debtors."

The most effectual means of acquiring a command of temper, which shall be habitual, firm and permanent, is to cherish that spirit which these passages imply. Endeavor to acquire and maintain greater tenderness of conscience with respect to your own faults, a more contrite sense of your deficiencies and sins in the sight of God, and more fervent feelings of benevolence towards all around you. When these dispositions are habitual, your temper will not be so quickly excited, and considerations which soothe and subdue you, will instantly arise to check and counterbalance its impulses. And these are dispositions, most favorable to the general improvement of the christian character, and enjoined as indispensable qualifications for that better world, where love and peace reign for ever.

EVIL SPEAKING.

The only other species of evil speaking which I would particularly mention, manifests, I know not whether most of weakness, or of depravity—it is the practice of flinging ridicule and reproach on others, for sincerely performing their duty. We sometimes find men so lost, not merely to regard for their own characters, but to the very sense of all that is pure, and reverend, and amiable in moral excellence, as to delight in throwing contempt and scorn on the venerable forms of holiness and sanctity. The higher a character rises above them, the nearer it approaches the image of God, the more deeply steeped in gall are the censures thrown against them. It is true, that depravity like this, we find only amongst the most profligate of men. But there is a habit far more prevalent—the same in nature, though not in degree. I mean the habit of speaking with ridicule of those who are willing boldly to stand forth in the performance of religious duties. We see this disposition often manifested, not merely in open avowals of jealousy, and dislike, and contempt; but in the more dangerous modes of sarcasm, jest, and sneer. We see it striving to render the character of piety and devotion ridiculous, by connecting with it some ludicrous association, by presenting it in views of weakness and infirmity, and in circumstances of awkwardness, absurdity, and error. There is no one of a

pure mind, or elevated feelings, who could ever indulge for a moment a practice like this, or who could listen to it without deep disgust and sorrow. That sense of religion must indeed be very superficial, and very transient, which cannot control the imagination, repress the inclination to satire, and destroy even the levity of the thoughts and the tongue, on a subject of such awful grandeur, and such solemn importance. Such a mode of evil speaking may now, indeed, be represented as sprightliness and wit; but there will be a time, when it will appear as the extreme of folly, and its merriment be turned to the wailings of misery.

PROFANENESS.

There are two kinds of Profaneness, into which many, and those, sometimes, of religious character in other respects, fall. Cultivation of manners, a refined sense of propriety, or a delicacy of moral feeling, will cause many to turn with disgust from every expression of vulgar profaneness, who yet are guilty of it in a milder and less offensive form. Have you not heard, even from lips which have often been consecrated by prayer, the name of the "good God," and the "Father of Mercy," uttered with heedless levity, as an expression of astonishment or delight? Have you not heard the mercy of God sometimes implored on the most trifling or ridi-

culous occasions? Does refinement of language prevent these expressions from being a direct and heedless calling on God?

Another mode in which many are thoughtlessly profane, is, by unnecessarily quoting the profane expressions of others, and giving narratives for amusement, in which they are introduced. This is often inconsiderately done, to give brilliancy and life to a story, to show how striking is the wit, or how daring is the wickedness, of the blasphemer. The least serious reflection will surely convince you, not merely that this is unbecoming and improper, but that it cannot be innocent,—that it is an unjustifiable familiarity with the name of God. Repeating the oaths and curses of others, has nearly the same effect on our own minds, and an equal effect on the minds of those who hear it, as though the profaneness was not borrowed, but was our own. Every introduction of the name of God partakes of the nature of profaneness, which presents it with irreverence or disrespect, or which has any tendency to excite towards him the least feeling of carelessness, levity, or indifference. This, surely, comes within the literal prohibition of the command-mandment,—"thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;"—not merely that we are never to use it falsely, but never with heedless familiarity, or vain levity.

EXCUSES FOR PROFANENESS.

What possible advantage can arise from the use of profane language? Does it add dignity to the character? Does it conciliate the respect and affections of others? Does it excite a greater confidence in him who uses it? Does it indicate refinement of manners, nobleness of principle, purity of feeling, elevation of thought? Its sure consequences are the loss of respect and confidence, from those whose confidence and respect are most desirable, the disgust and contempt of all correct and well-governed minds, and the compassion and sorrow of every pious heart. It is a vice so rude and mean, that none but the most depraved can applaud it; its coarseness and vulgarity render it offensive to a delicate or elevated mind; and its absurdity would even make it ridiculous, did not its wickedness render it awful.

What, then, is the temptation which allures men to it? In other cases, men become vicious by giving way to strong propensities of nature which they ought to have subdued, by indulging some passions which they should have restrained, by the prospect of great worldly advantage, or the powerful solicitations of others. But nothing of these can tempt to profaneness. No craving of nature is gratified, no furious passion attains its object, no worldly interest is advanced. The use of profane language is at first taken up with

reluctance, and is persisted in, ridiculous and fearful as it is, without any even seeming advantage, without giving gratification or pleasure, in opposition to frequent admonitions of conscience, and in defiance of the opinions, and in certain exposure to the disgust and pity, of the wise and good. There is no one vice which seems so perfectly without object, and without temptation.

What, then, are the excuses which men urge to themselves or others, in justification of their profaneness? Some employ oaths and curses as ornaments of expression, and fancy they give elegance and grace to conversation. Sometimes they are used to atone for fewness of ideas, and to help out the weakness of an unfurnished mind. There are those who fancy that profaneness will give an air of fashionable folly to their manners or behaviour, and others who can even regard it as the evidence of a noble and courageous independence of spirit. These are motives which often in secret influence the young to disregard the checks of conscience, and gradually to inure themselves to profaneness and blasphemy. To such motives for such a vice no answer need be given.

Another apology is, that when men are angry, profane language is naturally prompted, and rises involuntarily to the lips. But this is not true. It will never be the case where the habit of profaneness has not previously been formed. Do children by nature involuntarily use it? Or when have you ever found anger forcing such language

from lips, which had not in some past period of life been often polluted with it?

Some use profane language from false shame. In the society of the profligate, they are ashamed of showing reverence to God, and with an impious courage endeavor to manifest their disregard for religion by treating the name of the Almighty with rude familiarity, and making a jest of his vengeance. There is a time, and it may be near, when they who are now ashamed of religion, will meet their reward—and the mountains and rocks will in vain be called to hide them from that wrath which they now imprecate in ridicule and jest. "Be not ashamed," said the wise son of Sirach, "when it concerneth thy soul; and never let the fear of man cause thee to sin. There is a shame which bringeth guilt and wo, and there is a shame which is glory and grace."

But the most common apology which men urge for profaneness is, that they mean nothing by it, and therefore it is innocent. But can it be innocent to call on the name of God without object, and without meaning? Can it be harmless to invoke him as a witness to what is trifling, or to what is false? Can it be innocent to call in levity for his judgment on your own heads, or to imprecate it on those around you? Is not this what the commandment was expressly designed to prevent, when it forbids, not merely a needless, though deliberate appeal, but all familiar use of his name? "Take not the name of the Lord in vain."

How hollow and trifling are these excuses!

Yet these are all which can be urged to extenuate the crime of treating with ungrateful contempt that Being, on whom all every moment depend, and from whom our life and every blessing is derived; of treating with careless levity or insulting freedom, that mighty God before whom angels bow in lowliness, and archangels veil their faces! This is indeed a crime, which we see no retribution to attend on earth; but our being ends not with earth, and the threatenings of God cannot fail. How strong and how explicit is the denunciation of the commandment! "The Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain."

EARLY RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.—TO PARENTS.

Those who have grown up to characters of exemplary virtue and piety, are almost always able to trace the improvement to those impressions of religious truth which were given them in childhood. Many have felt their distinct and increasing influence in every successive period of life. In others, the religious impulse which was then given, seemed feeble; amidst the gaiety of youth, it seemed perhaps buried and almost extinguished; but even then it was continually exerting a secret influence in restraining them from vice, in giving force to the power of conscience, in preserving their moral taste pure, and in prompting good wishes and endeavors. It

prepared and disposed them to be benefited in after life by the instructions of Providence, the teachings of the pulpit, the exhortations of pious writers, and the silent persuasion of religious example. It rendered the mind susceptible of more powerful religious impressions, and the feelings more easy to be excited and formed to habitual dispositions of piety. If you desire, then, that the mature life of your children should be hallowed with piety, teach them now the fear and the love of God. And if the effect of your instructions be not immediately seen, still they are not given in vain. The good seed will swell and germinate in secret, the dews of Heaven will silently water it, it will gradually gather strength, and rear its form above the earth, and cheer you with its fragrance and beauty, and bear its fruit to the glory of God.

By training up your children in habits of piety you will secure to yourself the most lasting and grateful affection. Christian, with what feelings do you now regard the parents who first opened your mind to the consolations and hopes of the religion of Christ; who implanted principles in your infant heart, which kept you from the snares of a vain and evil world, and who guided your erring steps in the ways of piety? If those parents are now in heaven, with what tender and solemn delight do you cherish their memory! with what joy do you think of meeting them hereafter, and blessing them for that kindness which has trained you for another world! Do you desire

your children to remember you with feelings such as these? Imitate, then, the sacred example which is left you, and train them in the fear and love of God who made them.

But the strongest of motives is found in the consideration, that you are in a degree responsible for the religious characters of your children. To your charge is committed the most precious of all trusts; and for the manner in which this responsibility is fulfilled, you must soon answer to God. Think for what they were formed, and how high and awful is their final destiny. Consider that they are to be the objects, not merely of a present and earthly interest, not merely the inhabitants of this decaying world; but that they were created for an immortal existence. The impressions they are now receiving from your hands they never are to lose; they adhere to them in life, and rise with them from the grave; and it is greatly dependent on your care, whether they are hereafter the inmates of the world of wo, or the happy recipients of God's eternal favor. Your earthly relation to them may be of short continuance. They are destined perhaps to fall before you. With what anguish shall you stand over their tombs, if your conscience then should tell you, that their religious education had been neglected, and they were never taught to live for heaven! You yourselves may soon be taken from them. Will you now make no exertions to establish those principles and form those habits, which alone can preserve them when cast fatherless and mother-

less on the wide world of sin? May God enable you to understand and to feel your duties, and faithfully to discharge them, before it shall be too late!

RELIGION DESIGNED FOR ANOTHER LIFE.

MANY are too apt to consider religion as primarily designed to render men more useful and more happy in this world. It is true, the improvement and welfare of no part of our existence is to be overlooked, and religion was designed to have an entire control over us, and to promote our present as well as future welfare. But our eternal condition is the grand and ultimate object; and religion is designed to form our character and rule our lives in this world, not so much that any present purpose of existence may be attained, as that our souls may be saved at last, and the happiness of immortality be won. The welfare of the present life, in the awful light of revelation, is considered too transient, too trifling to be regarded, in comparison with the countless ages of futurity. Shall that future existence, for which this life is but a probation, be overlooked in forgetfulness, or be made the object only of an occasional, feeble, and transient attention? When everything refers to it as its end, ought it not to be habitually kept before the mind, and be made an object of our deepest interest?

The gospel requires of us a peculiar character,

and it is a character which in some respects seems almost unsuited to this world. Most of the peculiar virtues of the gospel are self-denying. It calls for a meekness which no injuries can overcome, and a poverty of spirit insensible to the fascinations and splendor of the world. It demands a lowliness of humility free from ambitious aspirings, from pride, and from vain display, and a patient submission and quiet spirit amidst poverty, disappointment, and sorrow. It most pointedly condemns the love of the world, devotion to its interests, and covetousness of its goods. Its choicest blessings are promised to those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, those who are forgiving and merciful, and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. On these passive and self-denying virtues the gospel lays a great stress. But the virtues which give success and prosperity in this world are the bold, ambitious, turbulent, and daring.

Placed as we are then in probation, the character we are called to acquire has a principal reference to a future existence. We ought then to be habitually looking forward "to the things unseen and eternal," that we may feel the worth and importance of those dispositions, which the world esteems not, and which all its temptations urge us to neglect. We need the strong motive which arises from a deep conviction of the realities of futurity, to excite and sustain our exertions for the formation of so peculiar a character.

SANCTIONS OF RELIGION.

We need not only to know our duty, but to feel the necessity of performing it; and the gospel has not confined itself to simply laying down plain rules of life; it enforces them by the most affecting and the most terrible of sanctions. It persuades us to obedience by the love of that God, who made us, and of that Saviour, who died for us. But it draws its most powerful motives from its revelations of a future world. By his instructions, confirmed by the power of God, and especially by his own resurrection, our Saviour evinced to us the certainty of a life to come. Death is now but a change in the mode of our existence. The grave is but the passage from time to eternity; and our present conduct will decide whether that eternity be to us one of happiness or of wo.

By the connexion which the gospel has thus distinctly disclosed between the present and the future world, it changes the whole aspect of our present state. It teaches us to consider this world, as but a scene of continual probation; to think of ourselves, as placed on the earth, not to trifle existence away, not to share a short-lived and troubled enjoyment, and then to sink into silence and insensibility, but as beings destined to immortality, placed here to be tried, and to acquire characters. It thus confers an infinite importance on the dispositions and habits we form, and the conduct we maintain. We are thus con-

tinually called to consider consequences, and to look beyond this world to that of final retribution. And what are the retributions which Christianity exhibits? It tells us of a world of glory, of pure affections, of exalted services, of endless improvement;—a world unentered by pain, or sin, or sorrow, where angels and perfected spirits dwell, and where are joys which no eye hath seen, nor heart can understand. Or if this move us not, it opens the abodes of tribulation and despair, "where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched." By the revelation of these awful sanctions, it makes its most solemn appeal, and urges us, by all that we can hope and all that we can fear, to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life. When the realities of eternity are thus placed full in our view, when everything is thus done to enlighten, to persuade, to warn us, what will be our condemnation, if all these advantages are ineffectual to reclaim us from sin and to lead us to a life of godliness!

INSENSIBILITY TO A FUTURE STATE.

How different the temper of the world! How entirely are most men resigned to the sway of their passions and the interests of the present state! "They are of this world;" the anxieties of its business are occupying their time, wasting their strength, exhausting their spirit, and linking their

thoughts and wishes to the earth; or the wearisome succession of dissipation and amusement is filling the soul, which God would train up for an immortal existence. Some little increase of gain, some poor splendor of outward appearance, some transient gratification of appetite, some faint and heartless breath of praise—these are the objects to which men devote their hearts and on which they waste their lives. The thought of their destination seldom penetrates their minds, and the voice of nature and of grace, though it tells of immortality, finds no response from their bosoms. Ask them of the objects they pursue with most ardor and earnestness—ask of the great end for which they are living; and they will tell you of some possession they covet; they will show you the children whom they would surround with splendor and affluence; or will speak of the pleasures they are heaping up for the time when old age has ended their labors, has destroyed their capacity of enjoyment, is filling their bodies with disease and pain, and hurrying them fast to the tomb. But ask them of their hopes of immortality,—speak of the purity and happiness of an unseen world,—dwell on the consolations and sorrows, the anxieties and joys of the heart which rests in heaven,—and all is cold and strange. Untouched by all the glories of futurity, they seem hardly conscious of any relation to a spiritual world and an eternal existence.—One can sometimes hardly realize this strange and frozen indifference. There are moments of solemn thought

to every devout and contemplative mind, when the reality of the world disappears, and all seems shadowy and visionary around it,—when the concerns of life and the pursuits of men seem inconceivably trifling, and nothing to exist, on which the soul can rest, but God and immortality. With feelings such as these it is, that the Christian looks habitually on the world, and mingles in its scenes of business or enjoyment. And must he not feel how different are his views, his interests, his anticipation, from those of others? He is conscious that he is destined, and is fast advancing to something higher and nobler than the scenes and intercourse of this life, and is now but a pilgrim and stranger, separated from that better country on which he rests his warmest affections and his dearest interests.

PREPARATION FOR HEAVEN.

In order to be prepared for a future world, we need to have our characters, tastes, and habits formed on its objects, and suited to the state we then shall enter. And in order to this, we need those distinct conceptions of a spiritual existence, which can only be acquired and maintained by an habitual reference to it and meditation on its scenes.

Heaven is to be regarded as a state of happiness resulting from the character we have formed, as well as an appointed reward. And if it be so,

it would be no happiness to us to enter the abodes of the spirits of the just, if we have not on earth first acquired the dispositions, and formed the habits, which would qualify us to participate in their services and joys. We do not enough realize how intimate and immediate is the connexion between the things which are seen and those which are unseen, between the present and the spiritual world. Death causes no pause in our existence; it only breaks down the tabernacle of clay, that the imprisoned spirit may go free; and as the veil of flesh falls, eternity with all its scenes will open full upon our view. How little then separates us from the invisible world! A few particles of dust and a moment of time! Shall that world then be ever forgotten, or be only casually and carelessly remembered? When it may be all around us, concealed only by the bodies we inhabit, ought it not to be an object of habitual and deepest interest?

THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN.

Consider the excellency of the happiness which the gospel sets before you. In comparing the value of temporal and eternal things, you are not to number up all which the world can give, and set them against the rewards of the gospel; for of all these worldly goods, how few can you ever obtain! It is not for the greatest, most imposing goods of the world, not for its palaces and thrones,

its pomp and glory and wide extended possessions, that men neglect their immortal interests. It is for the miserable gains of daily business, for some trifling distinction of name or office, or the unsatisfying pleasure of a few poor moments;—it is for these, that we see men, bound to the world, devoting to it all their time, and talents, and affections, in forgetfulness of God and the salvation of their souls.—Grant that you may attain all the objects of your earthly wishes; should you then be happy? Is this world so suited to your spiritual nature, that you could be completely blest amid any of its promised goods? Let me know the objects you so ardently desire, and which you fancy would complete your felicity. Do you point me to those heaps of gold, those dwellings of magnificence, that pomp of equipage and costliness of apparel? Do you carry me to witness those festivals of honor, and hear those shouts of praise? Do you show me the tables of the luxurious, or the gay revelry of the dissipated? Are these the best promises of the world? Alas! I feel that all this cannot satisfy the heart even upon earth. I feel that all this is little to fill desires which can comprehend an eternal felicity. I feel that all this is nothing to one who may aspire to God's favor as his happiness, and is tending to heaven as his home. These goods of the world cannot satisfy even amid their highest enjoyment—and how little can they prepare for solitude, affliction, and death! Do not then let them engage all your heart, be the objects of all your

interest and concern, and cause you to neglect a blessed immortality.

In order to happiness here or hereafter, we need to seek it from objects suited to our nature, large enough to fill our vast desires, adapted to us as spiritual beings, and addressed to our nobler and most exalted capacities. But of these the world alone has nothing to offer us.—Our happiness now consists in the mind and heart, and not in external circumstances: it is found in progressive improvement, in the exercise of pure affections, in the performance of duty, in a peaceful consciousness of innocence and rectitude, a humble hope in God's favor, and the blessed anticipations of a better world. These the gospel gives on earth. We look to a future world, and are taught that our best and only satisfying pleasures shall never cease; that no improvement of mind or heart, no worthy affections, no refined feeling of benevolence or piety will ever be lost to us; that all which on earth is pure and holy, will make part of the happiness of a future existence, and swell that fountain of endless joy which flows at the right hand of God.

We cannot, we need not, comprehend the nature of that future happiness, nor understand all the sources from which it will arise. It is enough to be assured that it is glorious beyond all which our minds can conceive. It is enough to be told, that we shall be for ever freed from all the pains and trials of earth, and the pollutions of mortality. It is enough to be told, that we shall be united to

the good of all ages, and gathered to the great assembly of the first born, redeemed out of all nations, kindreds, and tongues. It is enough that we know we shall be as the angels of God, shall enter the mansions which Jesus has gone to prepare, and see him face to face, and be ever with him where he is. It is enough to be assured that we shall enter the immediate presence, be admitted to the mysterious intercourse, be blest with the eternal favor of God; and that infinite wisdom and power, and exhaustless goodness, will be exerted to render us happy. In the prospect of future glory, we hear from apostles expressions of a joy which language is too faint to describe, and see martyrs and confessors giving their bosoms to the sword and their bodies to the flame. The same glory is promised to us. Shall we not then make it the object of our greatest regard and deepest interest? Shall not our conversation, like theirs, be in heaven? Shall we not strive, with earnest devotion, and zealous and active benevolence, and holy and faithful lives, for the honor, glory, and immortality which the gospel sets before us?

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[50,000, Nov., 1870.]